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HEIGHTS AND VALLEYS
AD CŒLUM

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HEIGHTS AND VALLEYS.



"A ray of sunlight had penetrated through the window, and had made a pathway of brightness across the dusky chapel to the spot where Irene stood."—*Page* 49.

HEIGHTS AND VALLEYS.

A Tale.

BY

EMMA MARSHALL,

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD GATEWAY;" "VIOLET DOUGLAS;"
"CHRISTABEL KINGSCOTE," ETC., ETC.



"Ad Cœlum."

SEELEY, JACKSON, AND HALLIDAY, 54, FLEET STREET,
LONDON. MDCCCLXXII.

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250. g. 160.

To Him,

WITH WHOM I TREAD THE VALLEYS,

AND CLIMB THE MOUNTAINS

OF LIFE;

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

THE PAST,

AND IN HOPE FOR THE FUTURE,

I DEDICATE THIS STORY.

Exeter,
December, 1871.

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HEIGHTS AND VALLEYS.

CHAPTER I.

FORTUNE'S WHEEL.

"Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with smile or frown,
With that wild wheel we go not up or down;
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great.
Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands:
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands;
For man is man, and master of his fate.
Turn, turn thy wheel above the staring crowd—
Thy wheel and thou are shadows in the cloud:
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate."

TENNYSON.

THE mists of early morning were lifted from the giant Alps of the Vallais, and the sun, just risen above the line of the eastern horizon, kindled with new-born beauty every feature of a view, of which few can be found more lovely and more sublime. From the garden in front of the "Trois Couronnes," at Vevay, an English traveller looked out upon the mountains and the blue lake of Geneva, as he paced the terrace-walk, his knapsack on his shoulder and his well-worn alpenstock in his hand. He was unencumbered with luggage, and as several groups of ladies clustered round piles of boxes and enormous rolls

of rugs and umbrellas, he gave them a passing look of pity—especially when one excited matron followed the *porteur* from the hotel who bore her burdens before her, exclaiming,—

"Am I too late? Can you tell me if the steamer to Geneva has passed?"

"No," said Philip Dennistoun, in quiet, deliberate tones which contrasted forcibly with the eager, shrill voice of the lady—"we have at least a quarter of an hour to wait."

"Oh, thanks! How provoking that I should have hurried! It is most exhausting at this early hour. Now, my dear girls,"—addressing her three daughters,—"*are* you ready?"

"Of course we are, mamma; we are all ready too soon; but you always worry so."

Philip Dennistoun moved away and resumed his leisurely walk up and down the terrace. The next moment a loud halloo! made him turn his head in the direction of the hotel.

"Dennistoun, what on earth are you so early for? There is no hurry. Come in and have a last word."

"Come out and have it," said Philip.

The speaker vanished from the window, and soon appeared in a somewhat hurried toilette upon the scene of action.

"Keep off from the Hen and Chickens," he said, with a significant nod towards the group of ladies. "I am terribly afraid of those people; they have bothered so the last three days; it's a mercy this telegram has called them home. But I say, old fellow, you have had no telegram, and I can't imagine why you don't come on with me to Zermatt."

"I have had my time on the mountains, and a very

good time too," was the answer. "If you had wanted my company, Sandford, you should have made better plans."

"Plans! I never have a plan. I go where the spirit moves me—here or there, it don't matter."

"Not to a man whose fortune is ready made; but your case and mine are different."

"And how are the briefs getting on, Philip? Are you leading counsel yet?"

"Not exactly: but I've had a fair picking since last year; the tide turned then. I got well out of the Tomlinson case."

"That's right; and now mind you look us up at Christmas. Why have you fought so shy of us of late?"

"I might ask the same question: you seem to forget the way to 8, Codrington-place, Kensington."

"No, I don't, nor that dear little sister of yours either. I am afraid of her mother, you see; but we will contrive to meet oftener. There, I hear the hen cackling; depend upon it the steamer is in sight. I wonder you choose that antiquated mode of transit—now locomotion is so much quicker."

"I always like a farewell steam down the lake, if I have not time to walk."

"Well, good-bye, old fellow. Three days of your company are better than none. They are making for the boat now, and I will depart."

The two friends parted, with a cordial shake of the hands; and as George Sandford retreated into the hotel, Philip Dennistoun went on board the little steamer, which made wreaths of snowy foam in the sapphire water, as she paused for a few minutes to give other tardy passengers a chance of catching her.

There was some little delay, and the lady and her three

daughters, the old gentleman and his wife and servant, the two gaunt, determined spinsters, with their Murray tightly grasped in their big, doe-skin-gloved fingers, and the poor forlorn little governess, who shrank timidly from her fellow-travellers in a remote corner of the vessel, had more than time to settle themselves. At last the wheel was turned, and La Belle Cygne was leaving the small jetty, from which the passengers had stepped upon her deck.

Then an halloo, louder than the first, made every one start.

"What can that fellow Sandford want?" Philip ejaculated, half wrathfully. Then, in answer to the shout of "Dennistoun!" he called out, "What now?"

The captain, imagining that the gentleman's frantic gestures were intended for him, gave the word "Tenez!" and La Belle Cygne lay-to once more.

"Did you look at the 'Times' last night?" roared George Sandford, as Philip leaned over the side of the little vessel to come within earshot of his noisy friend.

"Yes."

"The advertisement sheet?"

"No."

"Then look here;" and, regardless of consequences, George rolled up the paper and threw it on board, hitting, as he did so, the large brown hat with which one of the determined-looking maiden ladies had hid her face from the rays of the sun and from too curious observation.

Philip picked it up as it fell, and apologised courteously for the accident. The lady looked unutterable things, and grimly remarked to her companion that she supposed they should be detained another half-hour to suit this gentleman's convenience. But Philip scarcely heard, or heeded if he heard. Amidst the noise of the paddle-wheels

and the gurgling of the water, he caught George Sandford's parting words, "Old Dennistoun, of Rockdeane, is ——"

The rest was lost. Philip quietly resumed his seat, unfolded the crumpled paper, glanced down the announcements on the first column, and read,—

"On September 14, at Rockdeane Park, Sir Jasper Dennistoun, Bart., aged 81."

For a few moments Philip's mind refused to acknowledge the importance of that announcement to himself. It had come so unexpectedly; for, though Sir Jasper was an old man—as age is counted by years—he was considered hale and strong. Philip knew that his father had been the next heir, and that, as he was dead, he stood in his place, the head of a family which was so old that few could rival it on the pages of the peerage—heir to the stately mansion—the stern grandeur of which he had heard described, though he had never seen it,—possessor, too, of the princely fortune, which had accumulated through two generations of Dennistouns, who had lived in seclusion and solitude, and had dispensed scarcely a tithe of an income derived from one of the finest rent rolls in England. But not one of the anxious eyes fixed on Philip Dennistoun, as La Belle Cygne cleft the waters of Lake Leman, pausing here and there at Lausanne, Morges, or Nyon for passengers, guessed that the paper now thrust under the strap of his knapsack, contained any news which particularly affected him. He leaned over the vessel, looking a farewell to the snow mountains familiar to his eyes from long acquaintance, in many an autumn excursion. Calm and grand they stood, in the pure clear air of as lovely a September day as ever dawned upon them, wearing their crown of spotless beauty unaltered and undimmed, affected by none of the changes

which swept over the world below them. High above them all, in the passionless perfection which from afar strikes us with love, which is mixed with awe, and which on a nearer approach gives us a half defined longing for something warmer and more tender, for which our human hearts are ever wont to yearn.

Philip Dennistoun's life for the last eight years had been a somewhat uphill path; it had been a struggle for success in the profession he had chosen, and there had been the usual amount of discouragement and disappointments, of checks and hindrances. There was, however, in his nature a love of work and effort; he liked to climb and to depend upon his own exertions.

Just as to his strongly made frame physical exertion was a positive enjoyment, so was real tough brain work a true pleasure to his mind. How often had he turned homewards after an expedition like this, at the close of which we find him, braced for the winter's labour, invigorated and strengthened, anxious perhaps, and it might be doubtful, but always ready to meet and overcome difficulties.

How then in a few hours the whole aspect of life had changed for him! It was as if he had been suddenly lifted to one of his favourite points amid the rocks and glaciers, and had found himself transported in a moment with no toilsome ascent to the Col de Collon or Les Grands Mulets. It would have been doubtful satisfaction in the one case, and it was scarcely hearty satisfaction in the other. But as he thought, the horizon grew wider; there would be a field before him for energy and usefulness, and he might climb with even surer steps, as Sir Philip Dennistoun of Rockdeane, than as Philip Dennistoun, beginning to be known in the circuit as a man who would

find himself a Q.C. at thirty-five, possibly a judge before he had counted another ten years. Philip Dennistoun was awoke from his dream of the past and the future by the arrival of the steamer at Geneva. He had been entirely unmindful of the watchful eyes of the old lady and her daughters, whose sharp ears had caught his friend's announcement: "Old Dennistoun of Rockdeane, is ——." It was easy to supply the word and to connect the name Dennistoun with the letters P. J. D. on the little black travelling apparatus which Sir Philip bore so lightly on his shoulder, as he prepared to leave La Belle Cygne.

"Mamma," said one of the daughters of the party irreverently called by George Sandford the "Hen and Chickens," "I feel certain that man is some one of distinction. I should not wonder if it turns out that that old Dennistoun is Sir Jasper, and that this is his heir."

"Nonsense, Margaret," interposed one of the sisters; "as if a man could look like that, if he had come into a place like Rockdeane."

"Quite absurd," exclaimed another, while the mother, who had counted all her boxes and parcels till she was utterly bewildered, could only entreat her daughters not to talk so loud, and to be sure that the little bag with the straw bottom was not overlooked in the transit to the railway station. Philip cared nothing about the troop of ladies or their infinite number of boxes; he strode away, his knapsack on his shoulder, his alpenstock in his hand, seemingly unmindful of the needs or anxieties of his fellow travellers. But it was not altogether so. The little timid governess, who was going back to a second-rate school at Brighton after the holidays, to resume her weary task of instructing stubborn English tongues in the pronunciation of German and

somewhat Helvetian French, remembered for many a day the chivalrous courtesy of the Englishman, whose hand was ready to help her when she ascended the steps of the pier, and who, throughout the long journey in a second-class railway carriage to Paris, lost no opportunity of showing some care for her welfare and comfort.

"He is going second class, Margaret," one of the three sisters exclaimed triumphantly, when Philip disappeared from the crowd on the platform, and was seen by Margaret's sisters to enter a carriage on which was painted "Seconde." "I told you he could not be anyone."

"I take it, if he had gone troisième it would have settled the question more decidedly in my favour," was the reply; "you have such vulgar ideas about things, Mary."

"Thanks for your kind opinion of me," was the sarcastic reply; and then the heavily laden train lumbered out of the station, and soon Geneva, and its blue lake and snow-crowned mountains, were left far behind.

A loud ring at the bell startled the inhabitants of 8, Codrington-place, Kensington, the next evening.

"It must be Philip, Mamma," exclaimed a young girl, dancing to the door of the pretty little drawing-room where she and her mother were sitting. "It must be Philip!"

There was not much time left for doubt or for question, as the hall door was opened, and a breath of keen fresh air rushed in. Rosie was caught by her brother's strong arm, and, springing up to bring her face on a level with his, heard only, "Don't strangle me!"

"Is it really you, Philip?" said Mrs. Dennistoun, rising from a luxurious chair by the fire, and laying aside

a roll of many-coloured worsted work, in which she had been engrossed when the bell rung. "We are very glad to see you."

Philip touched Mrs. Dennistoun's cheek with his lips, and pressed her hand warmly.

"Where is Jasper?" he asked.

"Gone to bed with a bad headache. They have been playing a match to-day at Lord's, and he has been watching it, and he got over-heated. Now, Philip, what will you have—tea, or coffee, or anything more substantial? Ring the bell, Rosie, or go and tell Wright to put everything we have into the dining-room."

"Oh, you dear, old Philip, isn't it nice to have you!" and again the little lady sprang to her brother's neck, and, in spite of remonstrance, got as many kisses as she wanted.

"I met a friend of yours, Rosie," he said, as Rosie went off to give Wright her orders; "George Sandford spent three days with me in Switzerland. He is just the same dreamy, idle fellow as ever, but jolly enough in spite of it."

Then, as Rosie shut the door, after giving her head a significant toss, Philip turned to Mrs. Dennistoun. "I have not told you my news," he said.

Mrs. Dennistoun started. "Has that brought you home earlier, Philip? Who is the lady?"

"There is no lady in the case, mother; it is only that old Sir Jasper Dennistoun is dead; and I am, I suppose, Sir Philip Dennistoun of Rockdeane."

"Philip!" Mrs. Dennistoun could not get out another word. "Philip!"

"Yes, the death was in the 'Times' several days ago. Are there no letters for me?"

"Yes, in your study, where you always desire they should be put."

"I dare say I shall find some official announcement of the event from the family lawyer," Philip said, turning to the door. "Is there a light in the study?"

"No; but wait. I will come with you, and light the gas."

Mrs. Dennistoun took up a box of matches, and preceded Philip up the staircase to the room over the back drawing-room, which was designated Philip's study, and it was soon brilliantly illuminated.

Mrs. Dennistoun watched Philip's face as he turned over the pile of letters which awaited him. There was silence for a few minutes, while Mrs. Dennistoun busied herself by setting light to the fire already laid in the grate, settling the collection of stones and crystals and bits of Swiss carving on the chimney-piece, and scarcely able to conceal her impatience. She knew her stepson too well to question him, and he had seated himself by his writing-table as quietly as he did everything else, singling out the letter with the Rodham postmark, opening it, and reading it in a deliberate fashion peculiar to himself.

"Well, Philip?" Mrs. Dennistoun ventured to inquire at last.

"The poor old man was found in a fit of apoplexy—let me see," said Philip, looking at the date—"last Saturday, and never recovered consciousness, but died the next evening. Strange to say, the old lawyer and confidential friend of his, Mr. Balfour, also died suddenly a few days ago—the only friend he had in the world, poor desolate old man. Here, you may read the letter."

Mrs. Dennistoun eagerly grasped it, as Philip held it to her, and scanned the contents more quickly than her son had done. "What an enormous fortune has accumulated!" she exclaimed. "Five hundred thousand pounds! It is almost incredible. And such a fine place, too. I have often heard your father describe it. Really, Philip, it is hard to believe you are master of this. Who is this man who signs the letter?"

"A lawyer, who is to succeed Mr. Balfour in the business, I suppose. Let me look at his name again. 'Forster Williamson.' You see he says at the beginning that he had, only a year before Mr. Balfour's death, entered into partnership with him, and had been introduced, in his legal capacity, to the late Sir Jasper Dennistoun."

"So he does," said Mrs. Dennistoun, looking over his shoulder. "Rosie!" as Rosie's light step was heard coming up the stair.

"I am come to call you to supper. What are you doing here, Mamma?" And, as Rosie entered the room, there was seen behind her a white form enveloped in a cricket shirt, tied round his neck by the sleeves, and his feet thrust into slippers.

"Hallo!" he exclaimed, "What's the row? Phil come home, is it? Well, old Phil?"

"There is great news, Rosie," said Mrs. Dennistoun; "isn't there, Philip?"

"Yes, Jasper, my boy," said Philip, putting his arm round the slight figure which came up to him. "It seems I am Sir Philip Dennistoun, and"——

"Then I am your heir," said the boy, quickly. "How awfully jolly! I say, old Phil, this is splendid."

"My heir," said Philip, with a touch of sarcasm in his voice; "so that is your first thought, is it?"

"Oh, Philip!" exclaimed Rosie, "I am so glad for you. You won't have to poke about in those dull chambers any more, or go on circuit. We shall always have you, and we shall all live together in that grand old place, Rockdeane. And you will have plenty of parties and fun, won't you, Philip?"

Philip only said, "I daresay—now I want my supper; and Jasper, my boy, I should advise you to go to bed."

"I am all right now," the boy said; "I shall dress and come down, and drink your health."

But his mother interposed:—"No, my dear child, decidedly not, you must go to bed; as it is, I expect you will get cold."

"Get heat, you mean, mother. I have been blazing like a furnace all day."

"Yes, and delicate boys like you require great care," were his mother's words as she swept along, bearing the unwilling Jasper before her to his room.

Philip and Rosie went down together, the girl clinging to his arm.

"The old story, I suppose?" Philip said, looking back on the retreating figure.

"Yes, mother spoils him, and he thinks there is no one like his worshipful self. What would he be in your place now! Just imagine it!"

"I feel it difficult to imagine myself, Rosie, so I must leave poor Jasper alone. It is an odd sensation, this *embarras de richesse*."

Mrs. Dennistoun now appeared, and seated herself at the table, where a well-appointed meal was spread for the traveller. Mrs. Dennistoun was tall and slim; she moved and spoke with the air and bearing of a gentlewoman—a gentlewoman, however, who was fully im-

pressed with the sense of her own merit and position, and who had just that little touch about her which must be called pretentious, though the word is one that is neither pleasant to ear or eye. Mrs. Dennistoun felt the added dignity of her position, as she sat before Philip that night ministering to his wants, and enjoying the thought of all the wide-spread popularity, as his stepmother, which lay before her. Then what advantages would now be Jasper's and Rosie's. Jasper, who was a day boy at the Kensington Grammar School, would now be sent to Eton or Harrow. Rosie, whose *début* had scarcely been made at a little private dance in the neighbourhood a few weeks ago, would now be admired and known in the neighbourhood of Rockdeane as Sir Philip Dennistoun's sister.

"I must start early to-morrow again," Philip said, as he followed his mother and sister into the drawing-room, when he had finished his supper.

"To-morrow!" Rosie exclaimed.

"Of course, my dear," her mother interposed: "Philip must attend his poor uncle's funeral; your father would have done so."

"I shall be just in time," Philip said. "To-day is Friday, and the funeral is to be on Monday, Mr. Williamson says."

There was a pause, and it was broken by Mrs. Dennistoun. "What are your plans, Philip—I mean about this house?"

"I have scarcely had time to make any definite plans yet; but I shall give up this house, of course, and my chambers, and take up my residence at Rockdeane."

Rosie, who was seated on a stool at her brother's feet, looked up into his face, and said, "When are we to come?"

"My dear Rosie, it may not suit Philip that we should live with him any longer; you forget that."

Rosie's bright face clouded; but a reassuring pull of one of her fair curls satisfied her. She caught hold of the hand which had so transgressed, and gave it a little pinch. "Philip couldn't do without us, mother; you forget that. But I shall go to bed now, and leave you to talk it out; for I shall be up early in the morning to see Sir Philip has his breakfast, before he starts. What time, Sir Philip?"

"Sharp at six, Lady Rosalie. It's a pity you can't have a handle too, isn't it? but it may come all in good time."

Rosie responded, "Of course it may;" and, with a goodnight kiss, departed, her brother's eyes following her.

"She looks well," he said, when Mrs. Dennistoun and he were alone.

"Yes, dear child, she is always merry and bright. I wish I could say the same of my poor Jasper; he is so soon overdone and knocked up, and gets one of those dreadful sick headaches constantly."

Philip did not answer, and after a pause Mrs. Dennistoun went on: "He is very different to what you were at his age, Philip; when I first knew you, you were always well."

"Yes, I am as tough as leather, and as strong as a horse. I think the best prescription to attain that desirable condition is one given me the other day by old Mr. Norris, 'Never to coddle, and never to worry.' As he is ninety-two, and says he has ruled his life thereby, he is worthy of belief."

Mrs. Dennistoun shook her head. "Constitu-

tions differ so widely," she said; "Jasper has no stamina."

Mrs. Dennistoun was not a foolish woman, but she had her weak points; and the very weakest of these was her injudicious treatment of her boy Jasper—a boy who was ordinary in person and intellectual power; a boy whose self-conceit and selfishness were patent to all but to his mother; and who, had it not been for the wholesome influence which Philip exercised, would have been hopelessly and irretrievably ruined. As it was, he was as priggish and disagreeable as a boy of fourteen can contrive to be; and was as great a contrast to his elder brother as it was possible to conceive.

But even the discussion of Jasper's bad health could not divert Mrs. Dennistoun's mind from the great question of that evening: she returned to it after a pause, "Will it really suit you, Philip, that I and my children should live at Rockdeane? I have no desire to press myself unduly upon you; and—"

Philip was standing now with his back to the chimney-piece, and looking down upon his stepmother. As she spoke, he saw that her fingers were nervously playing with the coloured wools in her basket, and that she was weighing the possibility of the answer being given against her.

"I should be very sorry, if I thought that this fortune of mine should separate us," he answered at length. "If my father had lived—as would to God he had!—you would have been mistress of Rockdeane; and it would have been Rosie and Jasper's natural home—why should it be different now?"

"You are always kind and good, Philip," Mrs. Dennistoun replied; while he continued—

"We have been very happy in this snug little

house; may we only be half as happy at Rockdeane! I could have wished that my father had come into this before me. He would have made my path easier, and a name and a position inherited from him must needs have been more valuable. His was a grievous loss to us."

It was so unusual for Philip to speak of his father, and Mrs. Dennistoun had been so accustomed to lament her husband's death in the very prime of his manhood—for her own and her children's sake more than for Philip's—that she was almost startled by the earnestness with which he spoke.

"He left us the best friend in you, Philip," she said, her voice trembling with emotion. "He trusted in you to take care of your brother and sister, and well you have fulfilled his wishes."

Then Philip was silent again; at last he said, "My father knew nothing of his uncle, this old Sir Jasper. I wonder what his history was?"

"He was a peculiar, eccentric man," Mrs. Dennistoun said. "Once, just before Jasper's birth, I remember your father went to Rockdeane. He was on his way from Scotland. He told me of the visit and of the old house, which stands on a rocky cliff two miles out of Rodham. I recollect perfectly his account of the dreary desolation in which the old man lived in a corner of the house, seeing no one, and separated almost entirely from his fellow-creatures. Only the doctor and the lawyer ever had any communication with him."

"He was never married, was he?"

"No, I think he was a bachelor; but your father seldom mentioned him. I really do not think he ever dwelt on the thought of his succeeding to Rockdeane. He

used sometimes in his last illness to say that it was a comfort to him to know you would be able to do all that was necessary for us some day. Once, I remember, he added, 'Unless Sir Jasper should marry, as many old men have done.' Your grandfather, you know, married when very young, and he was scarcely of age when your father was born."

"I have heard that, and that Sir Jasper always cut him for that piece of indiscretion. You must not let your Jasper be as indiscreet, for fear I should follow the old man's example. Now, I think, with an uninteresting day's journey before me, I had better go to bed. Good night. I will write to you from Rockdeane."

Then he was gone, and his stepmother was left alone. She was always on perfectly easy terms with Philip, but he was seldom confidential as he had been to-night, and he did not often mention his father, who had died when he was absent on one of his autumn rambles. He had travelled home in hot haste, but too late to see him; and that it had been so, was one of the saddest memories of Philip's life. In all his dealings with Mrs. Dennistoun, Philip had always been, as she said, kind and considerate. The portion which he inherited from his father had been but small; for, if Sir Jasper had been saving and miserly, his brother had been lavish and extravagant, nor was his son economical in his expenditure. He was generous and unselfish, and at his death there was little left but his wife's marriage settlement, and Philip's small fortune as his eldest son. He had married twice—the first time for love—the sweet and gentle girl, who was Philip's mother; the next time for love also, in which some amount of chivalrous desire to protect the daughter of an old friend, and place her in a position of comfort as

his wife, certainly mingled. She had repaid his care for her by affection, and their married life had been happy. Philip had just been called to the bar when his father died, and Mrs. Dennistoun, at his desire, left the roomy country rectory-house for the pretty villa at Kensington, and there Philip lived when it suited him, his means being united with his stepmother's to make it a comfortable home for his young brother and sister. At first it had been anything but easy to maintain the position he had taken up, but latterly his briefs had been plentiful, and he was known as one of the rising men on the Western Circuit. As Mrs. Dennistoun gathered her work together, and placed books and papers, and Rosie's numerous belongings, in order, before leaving the drawing-room for the night, visions of the future floated before her. As mistress of Rockdeane, how many of her aspirations would be fulfilled. A position which many would envy was now hers; the best society of the neighbourhood at her command for Rosie, her boy taking his place amongst the sons of the nobility and gentry in and near Rodham. A goodly staff of servants, carriages, and horses; no difficulties as to dress, or the appointments of the house and table. All these considerations were anything but unimportant to Mrs. Dennistoun, and had presented themselves to her mind in all the most minute details before she lay down to rest that night.

Her reign might not be long at Rockdeane, for Philip might marry, although, according to all appearances, it did not seem very probable. But, short or long, Mrs. Dennistoun felt that she was up to the requirements of her position, and that Philip should never have cause to regret that she was the mistress of his house.

"Bright days were coming at last for them all," she

said to herself, as she heard the cab-wheels roll away the next morning, and Rosie, as fresh as a flower in the early light, came into her room to tell her, "That Philip was gone, and had taken a great heap of letters and papers to get through on his journey."

CHAPTER II.

OLD THINGS AND NEW.

"TAKE them, O Grave, and let them lie
Folded upon thy narrow shelves,
As garment by the soul laid by
And precious only to ourselves.

"Take them, O great Eternity;
Our little life is but a gust
That bends the branches of thy Tree,
And hurls the branches in the Dust."

H. W. LONGFELLOW.

THE sun was setting behind the dark-browed mountains of the Lake District when Sir Philip Dennistoun found himself nearing his northern home. He had telegraphed to his lawyer that he would be at Rodham by the 5.10 train, and, punctual to its time, the express was signalled at the station, and Mr. Williamson stood upon the platform to receive the new master of Rockdeane.

"Sir Philip Dennistoun, I think," Mr. Williamson said, as Philip stepped out of the carriage, his small portmanteau in his hand, and a satchel strapped across his shoulder.

"Mr. Williamson," Philip responded, holding out his hand, "you are clever to make me out so quickly." And, as he spoke, he looked into the frank, honest face of Sir

Jasper's man of business with pleasure. And, indeed, Philip had to look up at it, for Mr. Williamson was many inches above him in height, and was of an entirely different type to that which is universally recognised as the lawyer. Philip had had much experience of attorneys and solicitors in all their shades of difference, and all their degrees of excellence, but this man was apparently of another race.

"I have your carriage here, Sir Philip," he said. "You will not expect to see a London brougham, or a pair of prancing steeds. With some difficulty I have beaten up a recruit, in the shape of the old gardener's son, to drive; the coachman at Rockdeane died some months ago, and has never been replaced."

"There was small need for it; as Sir Jasper, I suppose, never left the house," was Philip's reply. He could scarcely resist a smile when he followed Mr. Williamson to the antique chariot, with its high wheels and great round body, painted yellow, with the Dennistoun arms emblazoned on the cracked panel. On a high box, from which hung a dingy hammer-cloth, the gardener's son was mounted, presiding over two very badly matched horses—it would be a mockery to call them a pair. The only thing in which they rivalled each other was in their plump condition, having eaten their heads off in the deserted Rockdeane stables for some years past.

"The taller of the two horses was the only carriage horse left," Mr. Williamson observed. "The mare is by right the bailiff's property, and is more accustomed to take him over the estate than to be harnessed to a carriage; but I do not think Mr. Smith has made many equestrian excursions of late. In fact, you will find

Rockdeane very much like the Palace of the Sleeping Beauty; the whole place is more than half asleep."

"Is that true of Rodham too?" Sir Philip asked, as he looked out of the window at the streets through which they passed.

"Well, no; there is some trade in Rodham. It is not a rising place, but it keeps its ground, and does not decline. There is the Cathedral to your right," he said, "and we passed the Deanery on our left as we drove out of the station. There is a large society, independently of the Cathedral circle, some few pleasant people, and the neighbourhood is good. But I am a new comer myself, as I told you, I succeeded Mr. Balfour after only one year's partnership."

"Yes; and I suppose you saw very little of Sir Jasper?"

"I saw him three times, that was all. I fancy some presage of his possible sudden end made Mr. Balfour urge the old man to see me; but he had not been communicative to me. Of course, since Sir Jasper's death, I have been reading the legal documents, but they are not many. The will itself is but a few lines; just to the effect that the heir to the baronetcy was to succeed to the estate and moneys, without reservation."

"Are there no legacies?"

"None of any importance; a few hundred pounds to his servants and the Rodham Hospital, and one of ten thousand pounds to a person in New Zealand, to whom, I see by the books, remittances have been made from time to time."

As the cumbrous old chariot moved slowly along, drawn by the waddling steeds, and took the road to

Rockdeane, the twilight was deepening. The crimson of the sunset sky had faded, and a light veil of grey cloud, which had been hovering eastward, now spread itself over the heavens, and came with a chill damp breath across the country. Nothing could be more gloomy or depressing than the aspect of the long beech avenue, as the carriage turned in between two huge iron gates, and rolled clumsily along the ill-kept drive. A gradual ascent of three-quarters of a mile brought the carriage to a sudden turn in the road; and then, still above them, the old home of the Dennistouns came in sight, with its antique gables and mullioned windows, built of dark stone, which would need a bright warm sun to cheer into anything like brightness, and now, in the dark of the grey autumn evening, looked forbidding and gloomy enough.

"The ground breaks off abruptly there on the north-west side," Mr. Williamson said, "and dips down to a stream which is often swelled in winter, and then deserves the name of a river. The precipice is covered with short brushwood and dwarf trees, and it is here very picturesque when seen from the opposite bank; the old house, or castle one might call it, sitting like a sentinel on its rocky height. The house has been very little changed in its outward aspect since the time of the Stuarts; and I believe Dennistouns have been at Rockdeane since the days of old border warfare."

Philip had heard all this before; but he was glad that Mr. Williamson should talk: his voice was sonorous and hearty, and relieved the weird sense of strangeness and isolation which crept over him.

"Here we are," Mr. Williamson said, as the carriage pulled up with a jerk, and the ungainly coachman clambered down to ring the bell. But his hand was

scarcely on it, when the great oak doors studded with heavy nails, over which the eagle of the family arms presided, opened in the midst, and a grey-haired butler, who, like the horses, had evidently known how to take care of himself, bowed as he stood ready to receive the new master of Rockdeane.

In the spacious hall, out of which a wide oak staircase led up into the darkness of unexplored regions, a flickering oil lamp showed the figures of the few servants who had been retained at Rockdeane. The housekeeper was a rigid stiff woman, who had succeeded her aunt in the position she held in Sir Jasper's establishment. She headed the group of maids, five in number, and Philip bowed in answer to their curtseys, and hoped they were all well.

"Mr. Smith is laid up with gout, or he would have been here, he begged me to mention, Sir," the butler said, as he preceded Sir Philip to the room where dinner was prepared. The housekeeper, Mrs. Mason, followed, and wished to know if Sir Philip would dine now, or see his own room first.

"I have prepared the great west room for your reception, Sir Philip, it is in the opposite wing to—to—Sir Jasper's."

"Thank you," said Sir Philip, "it will do very well. You will stay and dine with me, Mr. Williamson," he added eagerly, for the hushed voices and stealthy tread of every one about him, and the stillness of the house of death, oppressed him.

"Thank you, I will stay," Mr. Williamson replied; "but you must allow me to leave you early in the evening, as I have an appointment in Rodham."

"And while the dinner is served," said Sir Philip, "I will ask Mrs. Mason to show me my room."

Mrs. Mason made a stiff curtsey, and led the way back through the passage to the great hall once more, where one of the maids was waiting with a candle, and preceded her new master up the wide staircase, never changing her slow deliberate manner, and pausing at the head of the stairs to say, in a low suppressed voice, "Sir Jasper's room is there, Sir Philip, would you wish to see him? The coffin is not closed, by Mr. Williamson's order, till your arrival."

"Not to night, thank you," and Philip turned quickly away from the corridor towards which Mrs. Mason pointed, while the housekeeper went down one in the opposite direction, where Sir Philip at last found his room. It was like every part of the house, hung with pictures. A large old-fashioned bed, with heavy dusky curtains, stood at one end of it; the rest was dreary desolation, and a window, very much too small for the size of the room, looked down upon the wooded and precipitous cliff of which Mr. Williamson had spoken. Philip walked to the window, and tried to make out the features of the landscape; but the gathering night and the grey-clouded sky made it impossible for him to do more than trace the outline of the opposite bank of the stream, which was heard gurgling and rushing over its rocky bed. When Mrs. Mason was gone, Sir Philip made a hasty toilette, and was leaving the room when a portrait over the wide old chimneypiece arrested his attention. The eyes looked down on him with a curious grave wonder from beneath a brow half hidden by a Spanish hat and feather, and from under which abundant hair rolled in heavy locks upon the shoulders of the cavalier of Charles's time. Sir Philip held the candle to the picture, and as the flame flickered and danced upon the features, it was easy to believe that the man was breathing the breath of life.

warmly on it, when the great oak doors studded with brass nails, over which the eagle of the family arms proudly spread its wings, and a grey-haired butler, who like the horses had evidently known how to take care of himself, bowed as he stood ready to receive the new master of Redlands.

To the right hand side of which a wide oak staircase led up into the darkness of unexplored regions, a flickering light showed the figure of the few servants who had been left in charge. The housekeeper was a tall woman with an austere countenance. She headed the group, which the butler, and Philip bowed to, and the rest were all

"Mr. Smith is not well, sir, at present, and will have to keep his bed for a few days," the butler said, as he preceded Sir Philip and the rest where dinner was served. "Mr. Mason, the housekeeper, and Mrs. Mason, the cook, will be glad to see you, sir, when dinner is over, or see his own room."

"I have ordered the fire there for your Sir Philip."

"Thank you," said Sir Philip, "it will do very well. You will stay and dine with me, Mr. Williamson," he added eagerly, as the hushed voices and stealthy tread of even one above him, and the stillness of the house of death, oppressed him.

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Some lettering in one corner, evidently of more recent date than the picture itself, attracted Sir Philip, and he deciphered these words:—"Sir Philip Dennistoun, Knight. He ended a noble life by a glorious death while fighting for his king and his country, on the field of Edgehill, A.D. 1642.—Gloria tibi Domine." "That is a grand character to leave behind you, Sir Philip," he said, half aloud and half to himself. "What more could those who loved you best desire? I bear your name, let me bear it well." And even as he spoke, the grave earnest eyes seemed to meet his, and to answer his look of admiration with one of encouragement and kindliness.

Then Sir Philip made his way along the dark corridor down the wide staircase, at the foot of which stood old Forrest, the butler, waiting to usher him in to dinner. Mr. Williamson's bright honest face at the table was really very welcome, and the dinner was eaten with the sauce of much pleasant conversation.

Old Forrest produced excellent wine, and when he removed the cloth and left the shining black mahogany table uncovered, he put down by Sir Philip a bottle of port, saying in his small squeaking voice, "This has been forty years in the cellar, Sir Philip."

"Sir Jasper cared for the good things of life then it seems," Philip said, when he and Mr. Williamson were left alone.

"Yes, all the wine I hear is of the class of this port; but no one ever tasted it by invitation, except the Doctor and Mr. Balfour. I would not undertake to say that our friend, who has just left the room, has not tested its excellence, though perhaps uninvited."

Philip smiled; "Neither should I. Mr. Forrest looks as if he had had an easy time of it here."

"Yes, the servants can have had little to do. I believe Sir Jasper lived altogether in this room; all the things are lying about as he left them not a week ago. They found him here insensible, carried him to his room above, and there he died, as you know, a few hours afterwards. There is something very pathetic in living and dying alone, it would seem unmourned and unloved. But I must say good night, now; I must be in Rodham by nine o'clock. I will be here early on Monday morning, and the funeral must start about eleven. You know the Dennistouns have a mortuary chapel connected with an almshouse in Rodham—generations of them lie there. But it is a long walk into the city, and I must really be off."

Philip accompanied his guest to the hall door, and saw him walk quickly away, and then he turned back again to the quiet and silent house, and took his seat before the fire, which was blazing in the old-fashioned grate of the Library.

It was, as Mr. Williamson said, pathetic to live and die alone, apparently unloved and unlamented, as Sir Jasper had done. It is difficult when the aged die, to realize that the days of youth and strength were once theirs, and that the life now closed once lay before them in all the bright radiance of early morning. Difficult to identify the desolate old man, who dies as Sir Jasper had done, with no tender hand to close his eyes, and gather up every relic of him as precious, with the child who was the treasure of a fond mother, or the pride of a happy father; with the boy full of tricks, and fun, and merriment; with the youth setting forth on the journey of life, with resolute and impetuous step. And yet the old man, sleeping his last long sleep in the room above that

where Philip sat alone that evening, had passed through all these stages, and had gone down to the grave full of years. There was his empty chair by the fire, the small writing-table drawn beside it, the old-fashioned candle-lamp, with its green perforated shade upon it. Philip turned over the books which lay there, and was surprised to see that they indicated taste and cultivation—old standard books, which are dying out of the remembrance of the great reading public of these days, when magazines glut the world with periodical and spasmodic bursts of prose, poetry, and science. There was a well-worn and very old copy of Wordsworth. On the yellow fly-leaf was written, "Jasper Dennistoun—his mother's gift." There was an ancient prayer-book, too, on the table; it lay uppermost, and a mark was in it. Philip opened it, and his eye fell on the 51st Psalm. One of the verses was marked with trembling irregular strokes—"Against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Thy sight."

"Poor old man," Philip sighed; "perhaps he was reading that when he sat here for the last time before he was struck down. All his secrets and all his sins, all his hopes and fears, are buried with him, as they say no one knew him, and no one loved him."

Forrest coming into the room with some good coffee disturbed his reverie, and then, after answering some of the letters which he had brought in his satchel, and which Rosie had seen him hastily gather from his study table in the morning, Philip found his way through the dim corridors once more, and was soon sleeping the sound unbroken sleep of early manhood; while the noisy stream murmured beneath, as it rushed onwards to meet the river below Rodham, and Sir Philip Dennistoun, Knight, seemed to look calmly down upon the sleeper, with his

grave, serious eyes, as one whose warfare was accomplished, and whose victory was won.

The Doctor arrived early on the quiet Sunday morning, which dawned fair and bright over the woods of Rockdeane, to pay his respects to Sir Philip Dennistoun. Every day for many years had Dr. Simpson found his way up that long, irregular drive. Every day for many and many a year had he been, with the exception of Mr. Balfour, the only visitor at Rockdeane, and he now entered the house with the air of a man who was perfectly at home there. Dr. Simpson was a small, spare man, with a sharp, pointed nose, hungry, eager eyes, and thin lips. He was scarcely the leading doctor in Rodham. There were younger men, of a more modern school, who were gradually supplanting him. Nevertheless, Dr. Simpson had a well-established practice, and one such patient as the late Sir Jasper had been, secured him a competence. For, if the old man had grudged expense in keeping up any appearance suited to his rank at Rockdeane, he had been lavish in his fees to his doctor, often thrusting a cheque into his hand, which made it well worth the little man's while to perform that daily journey of his along the beech avenue.

Dr. Simpson was quite in earnest when he descanted on his sorrow for the loss which he had sustained; he knew very well it was a loss which he should never replace. But he had not been five minutes in Philip's society before he discerned that it would serve no purpose to make any pretension to him. His short, concise answers, and his straight, keen glance, made the little doctor shrink into rather smaller proportions than usual.

He magnified his attentions to Sir Jasper to the utmost, and, with many high-sounding medical expres-

sions and phrases which smacked of Latin, Dr. Simpson described the condition in which he found poor old Sir Jasper when summoned to his assistance.

"I think it right, Sir Philip, to enter into these details to you, as the representative of my late patient, and, I may say, very dear friend; you will excuse my doing so, I am sure. It is also my duty to ask you to visit the body with me, unless it is too much for your overtaxed feelings, Sir Philip."

"Certainly," said Philip, "I will do so, if you desire;" and he moved at once to leave the room.

"I can but deplore," said Dr. Simpson, with his hand on the door, "that death has snatched away one who could have given you so many more details of the departed than I can—legal details, I mean. Mr. Balfour was in his confidence, and every little circumstance of his life was known to him as his legal adviser; whereas, I greatly fear, the young man who stands in Mr. Balfour's place is very incompetent, from youth and inexperience, to conduct the affairs of such a vast inheritance."

"I have had the pleasure of seeing Mr. Williamson," said Philip shortly, "and I like him very much; he seems a good honest fellow, and has a clear head for business I should think; now, Dr. Simpson."

And then the two went together to look upon the dead. Apart from all personal feeling, there is ever something of awe and undefined sadness which comes over us in the presence of death. The Great Hereafter seems then to be everything, the present nothing. And in this chamber, where the dead man lay, the stillness was unbroken and complete. Here was no murmur of tender words from breaking hearts; no tears and bursting sobs to disturb it; here were no signs of tender care; no

flowers to brighten the gloom, with which living hands are wont to shadow forth the hope of life and youth beyond the grave—the hope of a resurrection, and a glorious immortality. It was so easy to see that even the servants in that house did not cling to their master with any affection. On the chimneypiece was the medicine-bottle, with his name on the label, which he had last used; his great gold watch hanging to a hook on a black stand, the hands still. Evidently there was no one who cared to gather up every relic as precious —nay, even to put out of sight the little things which spoke so forcibly of the suddenness with which the silver cord was loosed. Philip looked upon the still face before him, with kindly feelings of compassion, that none nearer than himself by the ties of kindred or love should stand there, and be summoned to see all that was mortal of Sir Jasper laid in his last resting-place. He turned away from the room subdued and thoughtful, and was relieved, when the garrulous doctor pleaded the pressure of professional engagements, and departed, with many obsequious protestations of respect and affection for the successor of his late most dear friend. As Sir Philip saw him step into his carriage, and roll away, he looked round the wide hall, and in a recess by one window his eye caught the ancient oak stand for hats and umbrellas, which was surmounted by a carved eagle, with its claw upon a coronet, which was the family crest.

"Mrs. Mason," he said hastily to the housekeeper, who approached him with her usual cat-like tread, "I think those things should be removed. I do not like to see them there now."

"Oh, you mean, Sir, the late Sir Jasper's hats and gloves; to be sure, I will put them away. Sir Jasper

had not been into Rodham for years, but he sometimes took an airing on the Cliff-terrace, when the day was sunny." And Mrs. Mason snatched from the pegs the poor battered old hats, of a shape which betrayed their age; and as she did so, a pair of doeskin gloves fell from the crown of one of them. She stooped to pick them up, saying—

"I beg your pardon, Sir, I am sure; it did not strike me that these little matters would be, of course, unpleasant to you to see. They are very old and shabby, I know," she went on in a half apologetic tone, "but as I said before, Sir Jasper never went beyond the grounds, and was not at all particular about his clothes, either hats or coats."

Philip turned away impatiently. "It was nothing of that kind I meant," he began; and then, finding all explanation would be lost upon Mrs. Mason, he took his hat from under the wide-spread wings of the dusty old eagle, and went out into the quiet still air. It was one of those autumn days when a mysterious hush seems to have come down upon the earth. As Philip stood upon the Cliff-terrace, there was not a sound to break the quiet, except the voice of the stream, as it hurried on its course; and even that was as a lullaby, and was subdued and gentle. The terrace was nine feet in width, and the old grey walls of the house overshadowed it. Beyond were wood and moor, and wide expanse stretching away towards the mountains in one direction, and in another, ending in one of those scars or precipitous ridges, which break up the wolds of Yorkshire and Cumberland in so many places. The cliff on which Rockdeane was built was of the same type of rocky eminence, and with the stream below, and the side of the scar so steep, Rockdeane must

have been found a safe refuge in olden times. The south side of the house was more modern, and was built in façades of various styles of architecture, in irregular but picturesque fashion, according to the taste and date of different owners of Rockdeane. The front of the house formed a straight and unbroken line, and the windows looked on a sweep of sloping grass to the turn of the avenue, and above the top of the elm-trees. The Cathedral could be seen with the roofs of Rodham clustering round it, and far away, in clear weather, a blue line of light showed where St. George's Channel washed the coast, and separated Cumberland from Ireland.

The streets of Rodham were quiet and deserted when Sir Philip walked through them that morning. The chimes for service had ceased before he had left the avenue, and the service was more than half over when he entered the nave of the Cathedral. The west front of Rodham is low, and not remarkable for beauty; but the great pillars which support a lofty roof give the idea of strength and endurance as the nave is entered. Services are held in the nave on Sunday afternoons, and rows of chairs fill it, which is a great loss to the eye which loves to see the violet shadows come and go through the coloured windows upon the stone pavement. But glorious combinations of tenderest pink and radiant yellow and purple still creep over the wreathed capitals, and light up with living beauty some carved face looking eastward for the dawn. The choir was singing as Sir Philip sat near the closed door which separated the nave from the inner court of the temple. A verger, who was slowly pacing up and down from transept to transept, approached Philip, and told him he could enter the choir by going round by the south transept. Half

mechanically, Philip turned to follow the man, and soon found himself in the chancel, where the Dean had just begun to say the Lord's Prayer from the communion-table.

Philip knelt with the rest; and, when the service was concluded, settled himself for meditation while the sermon was preached by the Canon in residence, who ascended the pulpit under the fostering protection of the same verger who had shown Sir Philip his seat. Philip made no effort to listen to the sermon; it was delivered in a low, monotonous tone, which failed to arrest his attention. He looked about, first at the graceful pillars and airy and pointed arches of the Lady-chapel, seen through the open reredos, then at the beautiful east window, intensely bright in colours, as the clear blue of the early autumn sky shone through its many-coloured pictures of saints and martyrs. Then his eye fell upon the reclining figures of knights and bishops, on the time-worn monuments which lay gazing upward with their chiselled faces, with hands meekly folded on their breasts, as they had lain for centuries. From things inanimate Philip turned to things animate; he was in a crowd, unknown. Every countenance was strange to him; and yet very soon—as by a magic touch—all these faces would become familiar as the faces of people among whom his life was to be spent. He was unnoticed in the congregation; those who sat in the stalls, those who thronged the benches, and those who were tightly hemmed into pews, which were like pens for sheep, and closed with doors, and in some instances locked doors, did not single him out for an especial observance. Bishop, dean, canons, chancellor, all their families of wives and daughters, would have looked curiously on Sir Philip Dennistoun, of Rockdeane, had they known he was present; but they did not know

it, and so he passed out in the throng unnoticed, as the sermon over, and the benediction given, the congregation dispersed in the nave.

He was sauntering across the Cathedral-green again, undecided which turn to take, when a cheerful voice pronounced his name :—

"Sir Philip, will you come home with me to luncheon," said Mr. Williamson; "or rather to our children's dinner. We all dine early together on Sunday."

"Thanks; I shall be very glad to accept your invitation," said Philip, cordially. "I believe I had some vague idea of calling at your house, and was ruminating over your address when you spoke to me."

"Ecclestone-square is where I live, my office is in Broadgate. Have you been to service at the Cathedral? I did not see you."

"I was in a seat in the chancel," Philip said; "I arrived late, and did not get into Rodham till nearly twelve."

"Oh, I see," said Mr. Williamson. "My wife and my sister-in-law are staying for the Holy Communion, so I have time to turn through the Close with you. It is not a very grand Cathedral externally, but the longer you know it the more it grows upon you; the tracery of the windows is so remarkably fine, and there are many other beauties which escape the eye on first acquaintance. The palace is not in Rodham, but two or three miles east of the town, in the opposite direction to Rockdeane."

Thus pointing out several buildings and churches as they went along, Mr. Williamson turned at last into a square of private houses with gardens in front, and, taking a latch-key from his pocket, said, "Here we are."

As the door closed behind them, there was a rush of

small feet upon the staircase, and a child of six years old took a flying leap into her father's arms.

"Papa, Randal has been so horrid!" Then, catching sight of a stranger, the little lady buried her face on her father's shoulder, and stopped suddenly.

"Hush, Hilda! What will Sir Philip Dennistoun think of such a wild elf? What have been Randal's sins this morning?"

"Nothing, papa," shouted a voice from the flight above. "I only tell her she is a silly, stupid thing to be afraid of auntie, and she is; she knows that.

"Auntie said we were not to play railways on Sundays with the chairs, and I *will* mind what auntie said."

"Come, come, Hilda, let me show Sir Philip the way to the drawing-room," Mr. Williamson said, putting down the little girl, and saying to Philip, "You see what a man with children has to put up with, especially when they have colds, and are kept at home on Sundays."

Sir Philip smiled, and inwardly congratulated himself that he had no such taxes upon his forbearance.

"I have a young brother of thirteen," he said, smiling, "the age of that boy, I imagine," pointing to the offending Randal, who now appeared upon the scene, and, pulling Hilda's golden locks, unabashed by the presence of the stranger, said, "I am not quite ten, and she is six."

"Not ten!" exclaimed Philip; "Jasper must be more of a dwarf than I thought him. When he comes to Rockdeane, you must come and make friends with him."

"Rockdeane. Oh! I have often been nutting in the copses there. That will be jolly."

"Here is my eldest child," said Mr. Williamson, as

Sir Philip followed his host into the drawing-room; and, going up to a sofa, the father said, in a very different voice to that in which he had spoken to his other children, "Cuthbert, my boy, this is Sir Philip Dennistoun."

A pair of dark earnest eyes were raised to Sir Philip's face, and a little voice, with the pathetic ring in it which is only heard when the speaker suffers, and has suffered from infancy, said, with a scarcely perceptible nod, "I know, father. Aunt Irene said he was come." And then Cuthbert held out a small, thin hand to Philip, saying, "How do you do?"

Philip looked down upon the child, as he lay upon his small invalid couch, and thought he had never seen a face which interested him more. He was always kind to children when they came in his way, which was not often; but he never thought much about them, except that they were small and weak, and therefore must claim from him protection if needed, and chivalrous consideration always.

"And who is Aunt Irene?" he asked, as Cuthbert's earnest eyes were still fixed upon him; "who is Aunt Irene, and what does she know about me?"

"Not much," was the answer; "only father told us all, Sir Philip was coming to Rockdeane; and we wondered, mother and I, what you were like; and Aunt Irene met you yesterday in the carriage with papa; and she said" ——

"Hush, hush, Cuthbert," said his father. And then he turned to Philip, and added, "You must pardon this little man's freedom; he does not know what shyness means; and perhaps we encourage him to talk too much. As he is always lying there, we amuse him in every possible way."

A faint colour came into Cuthbert's pale face as he

caught what his father was saying, and his eyes were directed anxiously to the door.

"Ah! here are my wife and sister," said Mr. Williamson. "Sir Philip Dennistoun, Mary."

Mrs. Williamson advanced to shake hands warmly with her guest.

"I don't like her so well as her husband," was Sir Philip's first thought; and the second, "How like the lame child is to the sister."

"Irene, I must introduce you to Sir Philip," Mr. Williamson continued. "He is come to join us at dinner, Mary, you have kept us waiting some time."

"I am really very sorry," said Mrs. Williamson, a pretty, fair woman, who was dressed fashionably, and had a touch of *empressement* in her manner, to Sir Philip, which had caused the comparison between her and her husband to be unfavourable to her. "Really, Forster, if you had told me Sir Philip would take luncheon with us to-day I should not have stayed to the full service at the Cathedral. You must forgive me, Sir Philip; I had no idea we were likely to have the pleasure of seeing you here."

All this time Irene—who was kneeling by Cuthbert's little sofa, the child talking to her eagerly in a low voice—had not spoken; but when Mrs. Williamson had said she should not have stayed to the service at church if she had known who their guest would be, she had looked at her sister with an expression which could not be mistaken—it was one of grave rebuke.

"Come, Irene," Mrs. Williamson said, in a tone which implied that she had understood the glance; "do not waste any more time, but come at once." And she rustled out of the room, half closing the door, on

the other side of which was presently heard a scarcely repressed tumult.

"I will. What a shame!" and then whispered maternal entreaties and commands. It ended in Hilda rushing in, and throwing herself upon her father.

"Papa, mayn't I come down to Sunday dinner? Mamma says I mustn't, because he is here."

Irene, who had very little change to make in her dress, and had laid aside her bonnet, drew the child away from her father, and said, "Hush, Hilda! You must do what mamma tells you."

"Let me plead for her," said Philip, thinking that the voice was the sweetest and most musical he had ever heard. "Let me plead, I should be sorry indeed to be the cause of Hilda's banishment. Shall we go down stairs, Hilda, and ask your mother to let us eat our Sunday dinner together."

"May I, Auntie?" the child asked, looking wistfully at Irene. But, without waiting for the answer, Sir Philip raised little Hilda in his arms; and, discovering by a smile on her father's face that he was by no means unwilling that his little girl should be gratified, he entered the dining-room with Hilda's face buried on his shoulder, and her golden hair falling over it like a shower.

"Hilda!" was her mother's greeting, "I am shocked. Irene, how could you allow it? Now, Sir Philip, will you sit next me?" And Mrs. Williamson surveyed the table, to which she had given several finishing touches, with some anxiety, but more satisfaction.

Hilda was deposited in her high chair, and Irene sat between her and Randal. Philip kept up a pleasant conversation with Mr. and Mrs. Williamson, in which he

wished Irene would join, but she devoted herself apparently to the two children, and did not speak.

Before dinner was really over, Miss Clifford looked at her sister, and quietly left the room.

"May I go with auntie to Hildyard's Almshouse to-day, mamma?"

"No, Randal, certainly not, you know you have a cold," said his mother. Then she continued, to Sir Philip, "My sister is a great friend of the old warden of Hildyard's Almshouses, and she looks after the poor old people, reads to them when they are ill, and all that."

"Yes, Irene is a curate to half the clergymen in Rodham," said Mr. Williamson; "she is here, there, and everywhere amongst the poor. By-the-bye, Sir Philip, Hildyard's Chapel belongs to the Dennistouns—it is there that Sir Jasper is to be buried to-morrow. Some of the Dennistouns married into the Hildyard family two or three hundred years ago, and it fell into their hands, with the charity which provides thirty-five old people with house and home under the will of a Dame Janet Hildyard, who died in 1537. There is a chapel, a warden, and a warden's house, all in the most antique style. The chapel is very old, and needs restoration; but there are some fine windows in it, and it is interesting in its way."

"I feel as if I were turning over the pages of a book," said Philip; "every minute I hear of something new in which I am concerned."

"Yes," said Mrs. Williamson, "it must be so odd to you, and yet very pleasant too," she added, with a laugh. "Every one in Rodham will be paying court to you, and will be anxious to know you—how different to people like us; when we came here, two years ago, we were

nobodies; and the Cathedral people are so stiff and exclusive."

"Nonsense, Mary," said her husband; "I cannot endure social fictions like that. It is a free country, and we may all choose our own friends, and we are none of us bound to visit this person or the other, if we don't wish to do so. Randal, if you teaze Hilda again, I will send you out of the room."

"Ah! it is all very well," said his wife, not heeding the paternal rebuke, which finished off her husband's sentence; "but Sir Philip will agree with me before he has lived a year at Rockdeane, that Rodham society is very stupid, and that people here give themselves the most absurd airs—the Tillets for instance—Forster, and the Hiltons."

Sir Philip saw a frown on Mr. Williamson's face, and hastened to say, "If this household is a specimen of Rodham society, Mrs. Williamson, I am quite content. Now I think I must turn my steps towards Rockdeane again, where I shall hope often to see you, and introduce you to my mother and sister."

"Oh! won't you come into the drawing-room, Sir Philip? I am not going to church again."

"No, thanks," Philip said; and then he took a courteous leave of Mrs. Williamson, his host accompanying him to the door. When it had closed upon him, Mrs. Williamson was loud in his praise.

"What an acquisition he will be, Forster. I wonder if his mother and sister, of whom he talks, will be like him."

"Most probably, very different; women's heads are sooner turned with an accession of fortune than men's. I would not set my hopes on Mrs. and Miss Dennistoun,

if I were you, Mary, neither would I mention names in that indiscreet fashion to a man who is a perfect stranger. What business was it of yours to trot out the weak points of canons, and Tillets, and Hiltons to him?"

"How cross you are," said Mrs. Williamson, the colour rising to her face; "you invariably find fault with me, but I don't mind. I mean to be great friends with the Dennistouns, and I shall let you please yourself."

"I am Sir Philip's man of business," was the answer, "and his friend too, I hope;" and as the children and their mother went upstairs, Mr. Williamson retreated to his study, the door of which he shut in the decided manner which made Hilda say, as she ran up to her brother's sofa, "Papa is gone into the study, and nobody must go there on no account."

"Is Sir Philip gone, mamma?" Cuthbert asked.

"Yes," said his mother, "I am sorry to say he is."

"I am sorry too," said Cuthbert, "I liked him, and so did auntie. Now, mother, do read;" and in Cuthbert's favourite Sunday story of "The Tent on the Plain," Mrs. Williamson forgot Sir Philip Dennistoun.

CHAPTER III.

HILDYARD'S ALMSHOUSES.

"Miserere, Domine!"

THE gate of Hildyard's Almshouses led out of a quiet, narrow street at the east end of the city of Rodham. Over the gateway the spread eagle of the Dennistouns presided, whilst their arms were cut in a shield, round which the motto was carved in old characters,—

"Ad Cælum."

As Irene passed under the shadow of the gateway on this bright September afternoon, she was nearly run over by the brisk little warden, who just pulled himself up in time as he was turning out of the door of his house, which was opposite the chapel.

"Ah, little lady," he said; "so you are come to cheer up the old people, as usual. There are several very ailing to-day, and they will be glad enough to see you. St. Magdalen's bell warns me to make haste, or I shall be late. Go in and see Mrs. Bolton if you have five minutes to spare. You know we have a funeral here to-morrow, the men were at work last night opening the vault; it is forty years since Lady Dennistoun was buried. There have been three wardens here since then."

Mr. Bolton was a little man, very agile in limb and very quick in speech. He had no dignity, and trotted and ambled off as if he were on wires. Irene had scarcely time even to respond to what he said; and then she turned to cross the quadrangle to a cottage at the further end, where a sick and garrulous old woman lay, very near the last great change, which we call Death.

Irene visited several houses, and performed her little, womanly mission of comfort and sympathy, reading for a few minutes, but mostly sitting quietly by the beds of the sick, and repeating little fragments of hymns and verses from the Bible, as they could bear it. There are diversities of gifts, and these gifts differ in degree, but I am inclined to think that a gentle, melodious voice, which comes to us as an expression of the soul of the speaker, is the very highest attraction that a woman can possess. There was not an old pensioner in Hildyard's Almshouses that did not own the power which Irene's voice possessed to soothe and comfort the sick, the troubled, and the sad; and none felt its influence more than the wife of the warden, who seldom left the precincts of that quiet retreat, and who had led, till the last eighteen months, a dull, lonely life.

Mrs. Bolton had buried every hope, as far as earth was concerned, in the grave of an only son, who had wrung her own and her husband's heart with bitter grief, and had died in a distant country alone, and far from those who had loved him so well. It was when she was bowed to the earth with this sorrow that Irene Clifford had first known her. It was about the time her own mother died, and she had come to live in her brother-in-law's house at Rodham. She had sought out Mrs. Bolton as one who had known her mother in her youth, and, step

by step, had won her way into the hearts of the warden and his wife.

"Well, dear," was her greeting, "you are welcome. How is little Cuthbert?"

"He has been stronger the last few days, thanks; and how are you?" Irene said, bending over her old friend, and kissing her forehead.

"Pretty well, dear; it is one of my sad days. My poor boy's birthday. Boy, I call him; he would have been forty now; and it seems so impossible—forty-one years! There is no time or counting of days and weeks and years in heaven! I always like to think of that."

"Yes," said Irene, "it is a timeless shore!"

"I should have liked to have seen him again—just once—only once," and the old lady sighed. "A mother's love cannot change. But oh, Irene, it is so hard to realize these are the same!" And the poor mother took from her pocket a little red leather case and in an envelope.

The case contained the miniature of a laughing, rosy child; the envelope the photograph of a large, coarse-featured man, with full lips, and bold, bad eyes.

"I should never look at this," said Irene, taking the envelope from the trembling hand. "Put it away, dear Mrs. Bolton, and forget it. The little child is wholly lost in this." Irene stopped; but Mrs. Bolton continued,—

"This was mine, too—my son, my son! Oh, Irene, you can't fathom such grief, my dear!"

"I know it; but God can and does sound it to its very depths, and He can comfort."

"Sing to me, then, darling, some hymn that Cuthbert likes, for he and I always agree in taste as to your songs and hymns."

Irene went to the little cottage piano and sang, "Brief Life is here our Portion;" then, "Paradise, O Paradise!" The latter was one of little Cuthbert's special favourites; many a weary night had been shortened and whiled away by Irene's voice, as she sang, low and soft, of the country where loyal hearts and true stand ever in the light.

As the last notes died away, a ring at the bell was heard, and Mrs. Bolton had scarcely more than time to say, "Who can it be?" when her little maid opened the sitting-room door, and said:

"A gentleman, please, ma'am, wants to get into the chapel, and Mrs. Gillett is out, and he can't have the key."

"He can have the warden's key. But who is it? Ask his name. Or will you go and speak to him, Irene? Susan is so stupid."

"I will go, certainly," said Irene, seeing her old friend looked flurried and anxious. And she quickly passed Susan, and, in the narrow passage, confronted Sir Philip Dennistoun.

"I beg your pardon for troubling you," he said. "I was directed to the warden's house for the key, as the man who takes charge of the chapel is not to be found."

"I will bring the key," Irene said, "if you will wait one moment."

"Sir Philip Dennistoun—is it Sir Philip?" Mrs. Bolton said, when Irene returned. "How unfortunate that James should be out; will you go with Sir Philip and unlock the door, and show him the chapel?"

"Yes, if you like, Mrs. Bolton; I have seen him before to-day, and will act as guide to him if you wish it."

"Thanks, darling. I know James will be so vexed,

and so afraid proper attention was not paid him. You will see to it, Irene."

Irene smiled. "Oh, yes, trust to me;" and then, as quietly and gently as she did everything, she returned to Sir Philip, the key in her hand, and said—"Mrs. Bolton wishes me to show you the chapel, Sir Philip; she is very sorry Mr. Bolton is not at home."

Philip murmured something about being unwilling to trouble her, and then they crossed the square together, Irene a little in advance.

At the chapel door Philip paused, and, looking back over the quadrangle, he said—"What a quaint old place this is—the abode of age. One could not fancy any one young here."

"No one is ever young in Hildyard's Almshouses. A succession of old people live here—never younger than sixty, many far beyond the threescore years."

He was going to say that the small figure before him, in the plain black silk dress and white bonnet, with the heavy keys in her little hand, one of which she was now fitting into the lock, looked as if she were too young and too fair to be in Hildyard's Almshouses, but somehow the words died on his lips. Irene was, he instinctively felt, a woman to whom it was impossible to pay compliments.

She held the door for him to pass, and they stood in a small vestibule, which was separated from the body of the chapel by a lofty, pointed arch. The whole building was not much more than one hundred feet long, but its details were in exact and symmetrical proportion. The chancel was ascended by two or three steps from the aisle, and though whitewash and paint had done their worst, no one could enter the chapel without being struck by its archi-

tectural beauty. Pointed windows, with trefoil tracery, filled with dusky coloured glass, admitted but a dim light, and the stone which was raised on the north side, just below the chancel steps, made a dark, gloomy patch on the floor, which had been recently paved with flaring white stones, as the old men and women had stumbled and fallen again and again in the deep crevices which the cracked and broken flooring had left.

"The bones of many of my ancestors lie here, I suppose," Philip said. "Ah! I did not expect to find him;" and Sir Philip read from an old marble tablet, that the body of Sir Philip Dennistoun had been brought from the bloody field of Edgehill, and was buried beneath on September 1st, 1642.

Then there was a space, and another inscription:— "His loving wife, Editha, entered joyfully into her rest with him, 8th February, 1643, after giving birth to their son."

The words were in old characters, and hard to decipher.

As Sir Philip ended, Irene said, "That monument opposite records the virtues of their son, Sir Jasper;" and Philip glanced at a long Latin inscription, which he did not attempt to read through.

It was closely cut in a small slab over the heads of Sir Jasper and his wife, the Lady Janet, who were kneeling with folded hands, two daughters and three sons behind them, in that stiff position which suggests a chronic backache to contemplate.

The vault, which was only partially covered, was just below, and for a few moments Philip forgot he was not alone, and stood looking down in it, many thoughts passing through his mind.

Irene waited patiently. She was standing under Sir Philip's tablet, surmounted with its sheathed sword and cross, and her thoughts naturally turned from the dead Sir Philip to the living one before her. She was quick to make up her mind about him, and to register in her heart that he was not an unworthy successor of the gallant knight, about whose memory lingered stories of valour, and chivalry, and goodness, which needed not to be set forth in magniloquent and pompous Latin upon his tombstone.

Irene felt sure, as she watched Sir Philip, that his arm would also be strong for the protection of the weak, and that he, too, would wax valiant in fight for a righteous cause. His was a well-knit, manly frame, and his head was set on his shoulders with that air of conscious nobility which lies so far apart from pride or arrogance, while an idea of strength was given by his firm mouth, and straight, wide brow.

Then, as she was looking at him, he turned suddenly, and began to apologize for keeping her so long; while his eye, which was accustomed ever to linger with the keen delight of an artist on any picture that was fair and pleasant, lingered with admiration on the one now before him.

A ray of western sunlight had penetrated through the window in the vestibule, and had made a pathway of brightness across the dusky chapel to the spot where Irene stood. It illuminated the words on Sir Philip's monument, and then touched the small head below it, till it shone with a living glory, lighting the pale, serene face, so that it seemed to Sir Philip that the aureole of a saint had surrounded her. She looked so like one of Carlo Dolci's pictures of a St. Catharine or St. Agnes, the dark

sombre background behind, and her white bonnet and brown hair concentrating the light.

"I do not know that there is anything else to show you," she said, as Sir Philip moved to the door. "If the chapel were restored it would be beautiful, but the present Warden is quite content, and thinks whitewash and paint cleanly and wholesome."

"Sir Jasper never came here, I suppose," Philip said, as the key was once more fitted into the door, and turned on the other side.

"I think not; but I have only known the chapel for two years."

"Good bye. Thank you very much for taking the trouble to show me the chapel," he said.

Then he lingered a moment; and, as Irene bowed, and turned towards Mr. Bolton's house, he passed under the old gateway again, and into the quiet street. He brushed against the good old Warden, before he had gone twenty yards, returning full trot from St. Magdalen's Church. Great was that good little man's dismay when he reached home, and heard from his wife that Sir Philip had been there, and that Irene had been acting as his guide to the chapel.

"Most vexatious. Not, little lady, that I doubt your desire of doing the best in my place; but I ought to have been on the spot; or, rather, Sir Philip ought to have told me he was coming, and I would have appointed a proper time. However, I shall see him to-morrow. I am to return to Rockdeane after the funeral, so Dr. Simpson says—the first time I have entered the house for, let me see, fifteen years. And what is the new Baronet like, my dear? Describe him."

"That would be a waste of words, Mr. Bolton, as you

will see him to-morrow; besides, don't you know the point of sight differs in different people?"

"And always will; but, my dear, the point of sight would be much the same with any one who looked at you now. You have a colour to-day, and look charming. Always *petite*, but nevertheless charming!"

"Good-bye, dear Mrs. Bolton," Irene said, bending over her old friend, and kissing her again and again. "And please remind Mr. Bolton to go in and see old Mattie early to-morrow if he does not go this evening, for I do not think Mattie will be here many days."

"Oh, yes, my dear, she will," said the Warden. He never believed death was near the old people, possibly because they were always, for the most part, feeble and ailing; and he was accustomed to see them go on, adding year after year to the tale, which, at the longest, is so soon told.

"Old Gillett ought to have been at home this afternoon with his wife if she is so ill, and not gadding about. He was not at church. But I think old Mattie has a long time to live yet. There are plenty of aspirants for their house, I can tell you, however; for of course I shall remove Joe Gillett to one of the single tenements. Good-bye, little lady—good-bye."

But Irene had not yet done with Hildyard's Almshouses. Old Joe Gillett, the recusant sexton of the chapel, stumbled up to her, as she left the Warden's house.

"Beg your pardon, Miss, but my ould woman is taking on so that I was out when the gentleman coom. O' course I did na dream of guests on Sabbath afternoon, let alone his honour, Sir Philip, for I hear it was he, and no one

else. He pounded at the door, but my ould woman she was 'twixt sleeping and waking, and o' course she could not rise herself to get the key. Wish you'd plase to come in and say a word to her, for yer voice is always calming, and she be wandering, she be."

"I thought her very ill, Joe, when I was with her. You should have told me you were going out. I would have sat with your wife. Now I am hurried, for I have been detained, you know."

"Yes, bless yer. But if gentry will coom 'o a Sabbath" ——

Irene preceded Joe into the cottage, and found old Mattie sitting up in bed, with a troubled, far-away look in her eyes. Irene drew near, and stroked the withered hand which lay helpless outside the counterpane, and tried to soothe her by gentle words; but Mattie talked fast and incoherently. She was wandering in the days of her youth, over the moors beyond Rockdeane. Irene listened, and tried to catch a connected phrase, but she heard Sir Jasper's name again and again, and then Mattie called "Susie! Susie!" who was wilful and headstrong, and "would go her own gait." Then Sir Philip's name was on her lips. She had seen him, she said, and she wanted him to listen to her. She had something to tell him. But, no, she would never tell him; why should she? Susie would have her way. "She'll be falling over the edge of the scar. I know she will. There, she is gone—gone—lost!" And old Mattie held Irene's hand tight, and with the other seemed to be trying to save something from falling.

"She was not like this when I saw her an hour ago. You must have some one to sit up with her to-night, Joe. I will ask Mrs. Sampson to come."

"She'll quiet down again. I expect it was the gentleman a pounding at the door that upset her. There, there, Mattie, ould woman, Joe is with thee."

"Aye, aye! but he's a deal younger than me—quite a young man; and he never knew Susie, my rose, my flower. There's old Sir Jasper a-coming to be buried."

"Hush, Mattie, hush! Listen to your favourite hymn. You will soon see Jesus now, Mattie."

The words and the voice of the speaker acted like a charm; and before Irene had finished the last verse of "Jerusalem, the Golden," old Mattie was dozing like a tired child, a smile upon her lips, as visions of the golden city mingled with the dreams of her youth—the big purple moor bathed in sunshine, and overarched by a sky of deepest blue, into which the larks rose, singing loud and clear in the vault of heaven.

"Joe, who is Susie, that Mattie calls so often?" Irene said, as the old man went with her to the door. "I never heard her speak of any Susie before."

"Weel, yer see I'm her second husband, I be, and a sight younger; but she had a daughter called Susan, so I've heard; but Mattie was always close. She used to say, 'Ask me nae questions, and I'll tell 'ee nae lees.'"

"She is going home now, Joe."

"I don't know—there's the Warden; he said she'd be all right again soon. Maybe he's a good judge."

Irene bid the old man good-bye, and marvelled at the phlegmatic, cool way in which Joe refused to acknowledge his wife's state.

"But she must have a nurse," Irene said to herself; and she tripped up the court again to Mrs. Sampson's cottage, and called her from her Sunday tea of cresses and

shrimps, which she was sharing with a neighbour, to beg her to go to old Mattie Gillett as soon as possible, "for I feel sure she is dying," Irene added.

Mrs. Sampson was the inmate of the Almshouses who acted as nurse. She curtsied to Miss Clifford, and said she would attend to Mrs. Gillett, and adding, as she smoothed her apron, and threw the wide green strings of her best cap over her portly shoulders, "that it would be the strangest thing if Mattie's grave was opened just when Sir Jasper's was."

"Why should it be strange? What can they have to do with each other?" Irene thought, as she walked quietly homewards. "Perhaps Mattie was an old servant of Sir Jasper's. I will ask Mr. Bolton if he knows, to-morrow."

When Irene rang the bell, Randal opened the door.

"Auntie, you are very late; we are all at tea."

"Yes, Randal, I know I am; tell mamma, I won't be a minute." And Irene ran upstairs, pausing in the drawing-room, to see what Cuthbert was doing.

Cuthbert's tea was laid out on a little invalid table, which was screwed to his couch. "Auntie, come here."

"I must go down to tea, Cuthbert, it is so late."

"Didn't you like Sir Philip? I did; he looked so straight and upright. And oh, auntie"—down went the voice into a choked whisper—"oh, auntie, as he stood up there, I felt what I always must be."

"Haven't we settled long ago, Cuthbert, that it doesn't matter what our bodies are? If only our souls be big, and grand, and true, and noble, what does it signify?"

"Ah, auntie, but it must be nice to have a body like

Sir Philip's. Think of all he can do; and I shall never, never do anything."

"Yes, you will, my darling; God has work for you, as well as for the Sir Philips of the world."

"It's hard to see what it can be," said Cuthbert ruefully. "But they are calling again; do go, mother is —" Cuthbert stopped, and Irene departed.

"There is only cold tea for you, Irene," was her sister's remark as she sat down to the table, "and no toast."

"Yes, there is," said Randal; "I've put it on auntie's plate, and buttered it for you. Hilda is so greedy, she would have eaten it, if I hadn't stopped her."

"Hush, Randal"—as little Hilda began to pout—"don't make mischief; but thank you for thinking of me."

"Irene, where have you been?" asked her sister. "Forster is gone. You are generally at home by five o'clock; you seemed in a great hurry to leave the table at dinner, which, as a stranger was present, I thought was scarcely polite."

"I don't think Sir Philip Dennistoun would miss me," said Irene, smiling; "but he certainly must be answerable for my late appearance at tea, for I had to show him the chapel at the almshouses."

"Show him the chapel!" exclaimed Mrs. Williamson, her eyes sparkling with interest. "How extraordinary! Do tell me what he said, and how did it happen? Where was Mr. Bolton? And I thought the old man who cleans the chapel had a key?"

"So he has; but he was taking a Sunday afternoon stroll when Sir Philip arrived; and then one of the neighbours directed him to the Warden's house for the

key. Mr. Bolton was at St. Magdalen's, and I was with his wife. As she is incapable, I had to perform the office of guide; that is all."

"All! Really, I think it is odd you should take it so calmly. What did Sir Philip say?"

"Not much."

"And you said less, I don't doubt; you are so incomprehensible, Irene; and though it has not much to do with the subject, I do wish you would wear colours again. I felt to-day Sir Philip would hardly think we were sisters. Why should you be in black and I in colours? A girl of your age cannot always wear mourning."

"I should not think of changing my dress for—for—our mother, under two years," Irene said; "but my mourning is now so unobtrusive that I think no one could notice it."

"Well, you will find yourself mistaken, Irene; it was only on Thursday that Margaret Thornycroft asked me how long mamma had been dead, and when I said, 'Two years on All Saints'-day,' she said—"

"I never think twice about what such people as Margaret Thornycroft say," Irene answered. "So don't trouble yourself to repeat it."

It was not often that the colour flushed in her cheek, or fire kindled in those dark serene eyes; but her sister's next words recalled her to her wonted self.

"You needn't get angry about it, Irene. People who know us, understand you. Only I do hope, by the time the Dennistouns come, you will have changed your style of dress."

"I am sure mother would say I was very silly to vex myself about such a trifle as whether Margaret Thorny-

croft chose to comment on my black gown or not. Are you going to church this evening?"

"Yes, Forster is coming with me to All Saints'. You can stay with the children, I suppose?"

"Yes; come, Randal, let us go up to Cuthbert, and Hilda too," and then she ran upstairs so quickly that even Randal could scarcely keep pace with her. While the two children went to the nursery to wash their hands and faces, Irene returned to Cuthbert, and sitting down on a low stool by his couch, leaned her head on his shoulder.

"Tired, auntie?" asked the boy.

"No, Cuthbert, I will read directly or talk, which you like best; let us be quiet for two minutes."

"Yes," said the child; and then there was silence in the room, while the church bells began to chime for evening prayer from the towers and steeples; and through the open window came the cool crisp September breeze, sighing a little as it touched the shrubs and trees in Eccleston Square, reminding the fading leaves that the glory of the year was passed, and that the time of decay and change drew near.

"Are you thinking of grannie, auntie?" was the boy's question presently.

"Yes, Cuthbert, she is seldom absent from my thoughts."

"Mother loved her, too, very much, did not she?"

"Oh! yes, very very much, but grannie was my all; and mamma has so many to love and so many who love her."

"So have you," said the boy quickly, "lots and lots; and then you've got me, auntie; you are such a help to me."

Irene smiled and kissed him, and then rousing herself, as she heard the sound of coming feet, she went to meet little Hilda; and, taking her on her knee, began the

children's Sunday evening by telling her the stories that never sounded so interesting as when auntie's voice related them.

Of all the stern decrees of that relentless goddess, fashion, who rules us in our times of joy and in our times of grief, with such a potent sway, none, I think, are so pitiful as the sombre, heavy display of a funeral. Sir Jasper Dennistoun's, of Rockdeane, had been put into the hand of one of the leading tradesmen of Rodham, and he had done his best and worst. Nodding plumes; encumbered horses, who stepped warily and slowly under the weight of velvet and fringe; senseless mutes, arrayed in grim order in their ugly garments; mourners—ah! what a mockery does the word sound—mourners, in enormous scarfs of crape or silk, the material regulated according to the degree of relationship, hideous trailing tails from their hats, whence all vestige of pristine form is taken. All these things were the features of Sir Jasper's funeral cortége, as it swept down the avenue, and emerged into the Rodham road, passing through streets, where hundreds paused in their day's occupation to wonder and admire, till it stopped at the old gateway of Hildyard's Almshouses, and the Warden came out to meet the heavy coffin—the sublime words of life upon his lips, whereby the Church would fain raise tearful eyes to things far above, and beyond all this miserable show and foolish pomp.'

Even as I write this, I feel the day for all this wretched pageantry is passing away. The number of such funerals as Sir Jasper's is steadily on the decrease, and we shall, ere long, see them vanish from amongst us altogether. Brighter symbols of a holy and blessed future shall take the place of these ponderous

tokens of earth and earth's vanities. Simple and plain will be the arrangements of a Christian funeral, and the ghosts of enormous expenses shall not force themselves to mind, like guests unbidden, even in the time of our bitterest woe, and add, as in many cases, another drop to cups already overflowing with anxiety and distress.

"I hope you were satisfied with the arrangements to-day, my dear Sir Philip," Dr. Simpson asked blandly, as he and the Warden and Mr. Williamson sat together over the remnants of a midday cold repast.

"We put it into the hands of Thornbury and Jones, did we not Mr. Williamson? feeling sure justice would be done to the memory of our late dear friend. I suppose you noticed the carriages of many of the leading gentry followed as a mark of respect?"

"Yes, I saw five or six private carriages," said Philip; "but I suppose none of the owners were personally acquainted with Sir Jasper?"

"No, perhaps not; but the name of Dennistoun carries its weight in the county. The Earl of Lynmore's carriage was first, then Lord Osborne's, Sir Wilton St. John's, and Sir Henry Birkshaw's. Sir Henry is High Sheriff for the current year."

How bored Philip got as the little Doctor went on in a similar strain.

It was quite a relief when Mr. Williamson said he would read the will; and, ringing the bell, Sir Philip told Forrest that he wished all the servants to assemble in the library, that they might hear that their old master had not been unmindful of their years of service.

"I am sorry the bailiff, Mr. Smith, continues too ill to be present to-day," Dr. Simpson said; "but he is really in a precarious state."

When the servants were assembled, Mr. Williamson was about to begin to read, when Sir Philip stopped him: "May I say a few words first?"

Then the young Baronet addressed the servants in a frank, genial manner, that won all their hearts.

Even Mrs. Mason's small, light eyes were for once caught looking full in the face of the speaker, while the other maids were moved in some unexplained way to tears, which they could not repress.

When it was over, and the household had dispersed, Sir Philip turned to Dr. Simpson: "Mr. Williamson does not know who the person named in the will, in Canterbury, New Zealand, is; can you enlighten us as to Susanna Cleveland?"

"I do so regret—I do deplore, that Mr. Balfour left no instructions, no information on this point. I imagine you have made every proper search, Mr. Williamson?"

"I find no paper which explains who Susanna Cleveland is, except the receipts and acknowledgments for the yearly remittance. Perhaps, in looking over the private letters, some light may be thrown upon her identity."

"If not, I do not know that it is of any importance," said Sir Philip; "it always seems to me treachery to pry into the secrets of the dead."

"Unless they in any way affect the interests of the living," said the Warden.

"That is hardly probable in this case," was Philip's reply. "Most likely Susanna Cleveland belongs to the dead past, which must bury its dead."

"Most likely, indeed," said the Doctor; "and I think Sir Philip exercises sound discretion in his determination. I presume you will remain at Rockdeane some days, Sir Philip?"

"I must return to London before the end of the week," Philip answered. "I have some arrangements to make there."

"Ah, yes, the Western Circuit will lose its brightest ornament," said the Doctor.

Philip shrugged his shoulders, and, turning to the Warden, began to talk about Hildyard's Chapel and the Almshouses, asking many questions as to the endowments and the services.

"Oh, there is one service a week—enough for the old folks, I assure you—alternate morning and afternoon, every Sunday. I could not serve St. Magdalen's without a curate, you see, unless such an arrangement was made."

"Did the present arrangement begin with you?" Sir Philip asked.

"Dear me, no; but who would wish to work a man to death at my time of life? I could not stand any addition to my day's routine, and those poor old souls, with one foot in the grave, are always thinking they want to see the parson, though I do them small good. One died this morning—old Mattie Gillett; she was a great age."

One by one the guests departed, and Sir Philip was left alone—alone—the possessor of Rockdeane. A strange feeling of loneliness oppressed him, and he set out for a walk over the moor, which stretched away for some miles in the opposite direction to Rodham. The pure autumn air, so crisp and fresh as the sun moved to the west, exhilarated and refreshed him. To him exercise was always as medicine to heal any sickness of mind. Like all really swift walkers, he always seemed to a looker-on to be only getting over the ground at a leisurely pace, and, as in everything he did so there was in this, never any evidence of haste. The level of the moor was broken

by little mounds formed by the boulders of granite, which were covered by turf and heather. About a mile beyond Rockdeane there was a knoll a little higher than the rest, marked by a rough stone, which had probably borne the cold and heat of centuries on its rugged surface. At this point Philip paused, and a glorious panorama stretched before him, glowing in the afternoon light, and extending in every direction for many miles. Like many other hale and active Englishmen, who have a taste for travel and exploring the secrets of mountains and glaciers, Philip Dennistoun knew comparatively little of his own country. To those whose professions confine them to any particular beat, as his did, entire change seemed necessary. Change of language, dress, and habits, give a zest to travel, and this in some measure accounts for the numbers of athletic pedestrians who, year by year, resort with delight to the Alps of Switzerland and the Lakes of Italy, and never think of the enjoyment which is attainable for them in the purple fastnesses and mountains of their fatherland.

Now, as Philip's eye rested on the outline of the Lake Mountains, and saw the proud heads of Skiddaw and Helvellyn clearly defined against the sky—a sky so intensely blue above, and taking the daffodil colour of sunset in the west, blended with the tenderest crimson—he felt those dark encircling hills to be as friends, and they brought to his soul a message of stedfastness and strength, as from the City which hath foundations.

The Spirit of God speaks to us with many voices. Our spirits, clouded by the dark shadows of the world, "deafened by earth's din," too often respond but feebly to revelations, and which would be so full and grand could we but stretch out with faithful hearts to grasp

them. But there are moments in the lives of most men and women when, in the visible glory of created things, we feel the invisible glory of the Creator; nay, more, in the beauty of what is an earthly paradise, we feel the love which has made sure for us a heavenly inheritance, incorruptible, undefiled, which fadeth not away.

Philip Dennistoun never said fine things of himself or of his feelings. Those who knew him best could not have told what particular shade of opinion he held, in what is called religion. But his was not the unstable soul, carried about with every wind of doctrine, or the feeble soul, taking its colour, chameleon-like, from the object that is nearest at the moment. Rather was it like the rock, which in sunshine and shadow, storm and calm, stands unmoved and firm. His nature had its roughnesses and inequalities; his very aspiration after great things might, without self-discipline, merge into ambition. But as I write of him I know that, in the voyage over life's sea, he will not make shipwreck, but I know he will come forth like gold from the crucible—pure, and refined by the fire. When he rests from the conflict, and sheaths his sword in victory, it will be said of him, as of his ancestor, Sir Philip Dennistoun, Knight, and of one greater than him, "He has fought a good fight."

CHAPTER IV.

IRENE.

"You love, remaining peacefully,
To hear the murmur of the strife,
But enter not the toil of life;
Your spirit is the calmed sea
Laid by the tumult of the fight;
You are the evening star, always
Remaining betwixt dark and bright."

TENNYSON.

"AUNTIE, let me go down just a little way, and get those big blackberries."

"Let me see if it is safe, Randal," and Irene Clifford went to the edge of the steep bank overlooking the stream which flowed under Rockdeane, and looked down.

"Oh, yes! it is safe enough; there are steps. Look, Auntie, quite a little path—just to that first ledge; do you see?"

"I see, Randal, but it is very steep, and, moreover, it is getting late. We have three miles to walk home, and the days are short now."

They were on the opposite side of the stream to Rockdeane, having walked through lanes and fields to the small hamlet, which was composed of the cottages and small farms of the Rockdeane tenants, all small and

insignificant, the largest occupied by Mr. Smith, the steward, whose illness had prevented his being present at Sir Jasper's funeral. The bank on this side of the stream was much lower than the one, on the very brink of which the walls of Rockdeane rose grave and stern; but, though scarcely more than a hundred feet in height, it was precipitous; and what Randal called steps were in reality only ledges of stone, leading on to a small plateau, from which the face of the rock dipped sheer down to the stream for some fifty or sixty feet. Randal paused, he had already begun to descend, but Irene's decided order brought him back. Nevertheless, he did not like to be beaten, and began to murmur something to the effect that "all girls were cowards, big and little. Hilda was a little one, and Aunt Irene was" —

"A big one. Very likely true, Randal; but there is a wide step between being courageous and being foolhardy."

"I told Cuthbert I would bring him some fine blackberries—a lot growing all on one stalk. These are such little bits of things."

And as he spoke he gave the basket a contemptuous rattle, which sent some of the blackberries flying in different directions. Irene had reseated herself on the stump of a fallen tree for a few minutes' rest, and was looking across to the dark walls of Rockdeane, over which one gleam of western sun was lying like a band of gold.

"There he goes!" broke from Randal; and the next moment he was off through the brambles and long grass, chasing a brown rabbit to its hole. As the boy disappeared in the brushwood, Irene rose, and followed him through the tangled maze of ferns, and brake, and heather.

"Take care, Randal," she called; "we are very near the edge, here. Randal!"

But Randal did not answer. Presently she heard a shout, "Auntie, it's all right; I've got them!" And on looking down the bank, just above the place where she had stood five minutes before, she saw the boy's head, and she caught sight of his outstretched arm trying to reach the cluster of blackberries, which were waving over the last ledge of granite above the narrow plateau I have described.

"Come back instantly, Randal," Irene said, as quietly as she could. "Randal!" And as the name left her lips, she saw the little arm again near the prize, while the boy's head slipped out of sight, and she heard his voice lower down.

"Auntie, I have lost my footing! Can you come?" Then again, with a ring of terror in the loud, young voice, "Auntie, I am trying to hold on. Do come!"

Irene's small, light figure, had soon descended within sight of the boy; but, to her horror, she saw he was literally swinging in the air, clutching with one hand a branch of maple, which grew in the clefts of the rock, while with the other he was trying to grasp the rough points of stone from which his feet had slipped when he lost his balance in his effort to reach the branch of brambles on which the tempting clusters of blackberries hung. Irene saw at a glance her position. She must catch the boy's arm, by stooping towards him, and try to retain her own footing on the very slippery ledge just above him. If that were lost, they must both fall over the brink of the narrow plateau on to the rocky bed of the river, sixty feet below.

"Keep still, Randal," she said, "quite still, till I tell you to move."

It all seemed to her dream-like and unreal—a moment of danger to the boy and to herself, scarcely recognised as it passed. But her presence of mind did not forsake her. Quiet and gentle natures have mostly this self-command in times of need. Steadying herself with one hand with the upper branch of the same maple to which the child hung, she bent forward, and caught the hand which was clinging desperately to the irregular fragment of stone above him.

"Auntie, I can't hold long, take care I don't pull you down."

Irene slipped into a sitting position, and fearing to tell the child to relinquish his hold of the maple, she grasped his arm firmly, and paused to consider what it was best to do next. If he suddenly let go the support of the maple branch, they might both be displaced by the shock, and Irene doubted her power of pulling Randal up to her own perilous position.

"I have got your arm firmly, Randal," she said; "you are safer now; let us wait a minute, perhaps help may come." It was but a moment, but it seemed an hour; the stream bubbled and murmured below, the birds sang in the Rockdeane trees, the rooks cawed, some cattle lowed in the distance; but no help came. On the calm still air was faintly borne the sound of the Cathedral chimes at Rodham. They sounded three times—it was a quarter to five. "They will be getting anxious about us. I have come too far with the boy," she thought, "and he has a cold too. Mary will think I am not to be trusted."

"Auntie," Randal spoke now, "my arm aches dreadfully, can't you pull me up?" The child's face was partly turned to her, and she saw it was very pale. He was getting faint with the strain upon him.

"One minute more, Randal, dear. I feel as if help would come. I am afraid I cannot pull you up, if I try." "We shall both go over," was her thought, but she did not put it into words. For another moment Irene paused, and there came to her a sense of strength and protection, vivid, real, and unquestioned, such as only souls, who live near their Lord day by day, can know. "He will, in times of need and peril, not suffer thy feet to be moved. He that keepeth thee will not sleep."

"Auntie," the voice was very feeble and weak, "Auntie, it was all my fault, tell mother so."

"Randal," she spoke sharply, to rouse the child, "I have your arm safe; when you leave hold of the branch, try to swing your feet up to the ledge on which I am, and leave the rest to me. Now, dear!"

But as she spoke, another voice sounded—"Stop, one moment!" and then there was a sound of the breathing of a man who had exhausted himself with rapid exercise, and Philip Dennistoun's head appeared amongst the brushwood to the left, thrusting the thick boughs aside with his strong arm, and swinging himself at last lightly on the ledge where Irene sat.

"I have you safe, my boy," he said; and, stooping forward, he steadied himself with the stem of the tree, and with he other, took Randal gently from his perilous position, and laid him on the broken ground just above Irene's head. It had been nothing to an Alpine climber to find his way down the rocky scar on the other side, cross the narrow stream, and ascend by a circuitous route to the spot where Randal had slipped.

"He will be all right directly," he said to Irene. "I will carry him to the top, and return for you."

A few giant strides took him there, and brought him back

again. "Come," he said, "you are as pale as the boy. I saw it all from the terrace. I saw him slip, and found my way here. I would not call or shout to you, for fear I should unnerve you."

Irene's face was very pale, and she sank down on the heather, by Randal's side, without a word.

"Oh! Auntie," and then poor Randal's courage deserted him, and, forgetting the dignity of his nine years, the tears burst forth. Irene put her arm round him, and laid his head on her shoulder. "Auntie, I thought we were going over, I thought ——"

"We were in great danger, Randal; but God had His eye on us, and kept us safe; we must be very thankful."

"Yes," and Randal's sobs grew quicker.

Oh! that he should be caught crying like a baby by a man, and that man Sir Philip too! to whom he had talked so grandly on Sunday of all he could do.

"Does your arm hurt you now?"

"Yes, but I don't mind that. How could you come to us so quickly?" he asked of Philip. "I saw you over there, when I ran after the rabbit."

"Yes, and it was a lucky thing I saw you, my boy. Those dandy red stockings of yours caught my eye amongst the bushes. I thought you might be some moor bird, at first, with very black feathers and very scarlet legs."

"We must go home now, Randal," said Irene; "let us try to walk as fast as we can. Your mother will be so anxious; we have a long way to walk." She rose as she spoke; but Sir Philip interposed.

"I am sure you cannot walk to Rodham after hanging in mid-air in that way. I believe my steward, Mr. Smith, has a conveyance of some sort, and if you will come with

me to his house, which I take it is that white one under the trees, I will endeavour to get it for you."

Irene hesitated; and then a glance at Randal's white face and quivering lips decided her.

"Thank you, perhaps it will be best," she said, and then added: "It is very odd, I think, that all this time I have never thanked you for your help; but I do thank you very much, and so will Randal's mother."

"It was the simplest thing in the world," he said, "for me to come over to your rescue. I had been exploring the moor, and I had only that moment turned out on the terrace, when the boy's legs attracted me. I saw the whole thing, and saw your courage and marvellous calmness. As I looked up at you in your perilous position, I felt it was a question how long you could hold out. There seemed no possible foothold for the boy —a brave little fellow, too, or he would not have held on as he did—and not a cry nor a scream from either of you!"

"I don't think great danger ever finds cries or screams to express it. All realities strike us dumb, and all depths are still and noiseless."

"It is not so with all women." And as he saw her lip curl almost imperceptibly, he added: "Nor with all men either."

"I am not offended at the distinction you implied," Irene said; "you need not have added the saving clause. I know very well there is a great deal of truth in the credit we women get for shallowness and want of strength."

"There are great and notable exceptions," he answered, "as I have seen to-day. Here we are, at Mr. Smith's door. Come, my boy, I hope you will soon be at home now."

Sir Philip's knock at the door was answered by a neat maid-servant, who said Mr. Smith was very ill, and Mrs. Smith was particularly engaged.

"I should be very glad if I could see Mrs. Smith for two minutes. Take her this card, and say I will wait."

Sir Philip handed his card from his pocket-book, on which was printed, "Philip Dennistoun, Elm Court, Temple;" and the little maid disappeared with it up the staircase, which came sloping down inconveniently near the front door. She soon returned:

"Please to walk in, Sir. Missis will be down directly," she said; "please to walk in here;" and the maid opened the door of a sitting-room, which looked out on the strip of garden, and had that unaired and stuffy atmosphere about it which told the tale of windows hermetically sealed and an unused best parlour. Three or four chairs stood round a table where bead-mats, a photograph-book, and a stand of wax flowers, reigned supreme and unmolested. A sofa covered with a gay chintz, and a cheffionier with glass doors, completed the furniture of the room.

Irene sat down, and drew Randal towards her.

"Oh, my arm, Auntie!"

"It is sprained, I am afraid. Does it hurt much."

"Well, yes; and I feel so—so dizzy!"

"Lay him on the sofa," said Philip; "the child is overwrought;" and, suiting the action to the word, Philip lifted Randal on the sofa, with its spotless chintz and netted coverings, regardless of dirty boots, regardless of what Mrs. Smith would say when she came.

At last the door opened with a majestic swing, and a very stout personage appeared, who seemed inconveniently large in that small room. Her stiff silk gown rattled and

rustled, and her smart cap had been evidently put on in great haste.

"I am sure, Mr. Dennistoun, if you are a relative of the new Baronet's, I am proud to see you; and is this your lady and your little gentleman? Dear, dear! the poor child is ill; or, what is it?"

"Mrs. Smith," said Philip, anxious to correct a mistake which, if ludicrous, was somewhat embarrassing; "I must introduce myself as your near neighbour at Rockdeane. I am sorry Mr. Smith is so ill. I have come to ask a favour——"

"Lor bless me! Are you *Sir* Philip? I beg thousands of pardons, and your lady's; but then I heard you wern't married. It is your sister, of course. I am that stupid and daft, shut up with Smith as I am, week after week, that I hope you'll excuse me, Sir Philip. Your card mistook me: I mean, I mistook your card; and thought Elm Court was your family place; and——"

In spite of himself, a smile broke over Philip's face; but oh, the impossibility of stopping a woman's tongue like Mrs. Smith's!

"This little boy, Mrs. Smith, has had a fall, and has sprained his arm. I met him and Miss Clifford accidentally. They have a long walk to Rodham, and I want to know if I can have any conveyance—Mr. Smith's pony and gig, perhaps—I suppose he uses one?"

"He did use one before he was laid up, Sir Philip; but it's a ramshackle old four-wheel, and the grey mare is that fat and lazy, you have to whip her well to make her move. She was borrowed the other day by lawyer Williamson to put to the chariot when he went to meet the new master; but there, I should not say borrowed, for all here is yours, Sir. The thing is, the men are gone, and I

don't believe there is one about the place, and who is to get the trap out of the coach-house and put Misty into it? Poor Smith called her Misty. Some poetical idea it was about the grey mists, or such stuff. I am sorry I ain't in black, as, of course, I ought to be on this day; but, never out of Smith's room, what's the use of dressing? And he is that cross-grained, poor fellow, it is enough to craze one."

As she spoke, a loud knocking, evidently with a stick, was made on the floor of the room above.

"That's he: now hark to him," as the thumps were reiterated. "I must go, if you'll please to excuse it."

And as Mrs. Smith was heard labouring up the narrow stairs with heavy feet, Sir Philip said: "I will take the opportunity, and look after this four-wheel myself, and see if I can prevail on Misty to rise to the emergency."

Mrs. Smith was the first to return, followed by the rosy maid with wine and cake, of which she pressed her guests to partake.

"Smith was roaring like a caged bull," his wife said, "wanting to know who it was talking to me down-stairs; and when he heard it was Sir Philip—Well there!"—and Mrs. Smith's gestures alone expressed her feelings as to what her husband had said—"He wants to see the new baronet, but he can't. He isn't fit to be seen, and it would take me an hour to put him tidy. He screeches so if you do but put a finger on his leg."

"What has he done to his leg?" asked Randal, who had revived under the influence of Mrs. Smith's sweet wine and excellent cake.

"He hasn't done anything to it, my dear; it's the gout; and if it ain't in his leg it's in his arm; and it will kill him when it gets to a vitally part."

"A what?" Randal questioned, but Irene interposed—

"It is a most trying complaint, and so hard to bear, I know. It is very kind of you, Mrs. Smith, to let us rest."

And then she told the story of the afternoon to her good-natured hostess, who kept reproaching herself on the mistake she had made as to Sir Philip's identity.

"And so awkward for you, Missie, for I see you are quite young—too young for the Baronet—though stranger things have happened. What's that Smith says about 'shadows cast afore?' I don't know the words; but he's very fond of his books, and knows heaps of 'em through and through. Well, I never, here's Sir Philip at the gate, and the shandry—as we call it—if he has not put Misty in himself; and who's to drive?"

Irene wondered; but she had not much more time for speculation, for Sir Philip came in the next moment with an ancient whip with a horn handle in his hand, and declared that he was ready to start for Rodham. It was all done as if there was nothing unusual in it; and it was not till they had bid Mrs. Smith good-bye; not till Irene and Randal were safely in the back seat of the shandry, and Philip had cracked the whip over Misty's broad back with such effect that she actually tried something like a trot; not till the little maid had withdrawn from the gate, saying to Mrs. Smith, "I never did, ma'am, you should have seen how handy the gentleman was harnessing and putting to," that Philip gave way to the absurdity of his position, and broke into one of his rare

fits of honest laughter. It was infectious; and Irene laughed too, and poor Randal made a feeble effort to join in the chorus.

"Well, Miss Clifford, here we are fairly off for Rodham. I hope you give me credit for my diversified powers; but, getting the horse to the water is one thing, and making him drink quite another. Now then, Misty, wake up, and stir your old legs a little faster than this."

As, at last, the four-wheel shandry turned into the high road to Rodham, a carriage, with a pair of prancing horses, full of people, passed. A lady in it turned and looked back at Irene, waved her hand, a smile of surprise and recognition passing over her face.

"Whose carriage is that," Philip asked; "some Rodham celebrities?"

"It is the Bishop's carriage. The young lady was Lady Eugenia Le Marchant, an orphan niece of Lady Catharine Weston's, and she lives with them at Bishop's Court."

"It was a very pretty face. I wonder what she thought of you, Miss Clifford, in this distinguished equipage."

"I dare say she did not think about me at all," was the answer.

"Do you know the young lady?"

"Yes; I have seen her before. I can hardly be said to know her," Irene answered; "but I have met her once or twice."

"Upon my word here is another carriage, as full as the last. We are in good company. Who are these?"

"That is the Tilletts' carriage. They are the principal bankers in Rodham."

"You don't know them?" Sir Philip said, as the carriage rolled past, and Mrs. Tillett put up her eye-glass and looked with a supercilious smile, which was not one of recognition, however. "The Tilletts!" Sir Philip said; "ah! I remember the name amongst the list of people whom your sister enumerated yesterday.

"Yes, Mary gets rubbed the wrong way by the Tilletts of the world, I can't think why."

"They don't rub you the wrong way then?"

"No."

He turned to look at the quiet serene face in the twilight, and he wondered what did rub her the wrong way, or ruffle her; and yet it was not a tame unmeaning face at all. It only looked like her name—Peace!

"If I care about people, if I love them, and they slight me, or, as Mary expresses it, snub me, I mind it—it hurts me; but if I don't care about them, they have no power to do so."

"I see;" and Misty was allowed to drop into a lazy swing, as Sir Philip leaned back in the front seat, and talked.

"Another carriage—a quiet, respectable brougham this time. Who are these?"

"Canon and Mrs. Horne," Irene answered. "I daresay there has been an afternoon party at some country house in this direction;" and Irene had to bow her head, and respond to Mrs. Horne's energetic greeting.

"Well, they none of them know who I am," said Sir Philip. "Perhaps they will think you have fallen into bad hands. I can just imagine my little sister Rosie's face, if she could see me now. She has built such grand castles about Rockdeane and its glories, it would be a terrible coming down from her rose-coloured height to

the grey reality of this time-worn shandry, the old whip with its horn handle, and Misty's sober paces, and my trotting myself out before half Rodham in so ignoble a fashion, too! I hope you and Rosie will be friends," he said, presently. "She will want a companion here; and Jasper, poor Jasper, may learn, I hope, a lesson in courage from that little fellow who is forgetting his troubles in sleep, I see."

"Yes, poor Randal, he has a lion's heart; but he is very wilful and headstrong—so unlike Cuthbert."

"Is that the lame boy I saw on Sunday?"

"Yes;" and her voice betrayed that there were depths of tenderness in her heart when she spoke of Cuthbert. "Yes, no one can know what Cuthbert is. Saintly in his patience, heroic in his courage, a soul that might have done and dared all for the right, had he but the bodily power and strength."

"He is your especial favourite, I see."

"I love all my sister's children; but I do more than love Cuthbert—I reverence him."

Philip was silent. The twilight was deepening, and, as they neared Rodham, the Cathedral towers and the castle battlements stood up, dim and mysterious, in the gathering shadows. The town itself was veiled with a light, transparent mist, out of which the principal objects rose, ghost-like and solemn. Above, the sky was of a tender blue, where the stars were just faintly twinkling, and a new moon hung suspended like a curved thread of silver.

Presently, Philip spoke. "There is something very old-world-like and quaint in Rodham, I should think. I suppose it answers to the hackneyed descriptions of all

Cathedral towns. After my busy, migratory life, I feel as if I should find this boundary set to my habitation irksome. I can't live without something to do, and I can believe that Rodham is just the place to look coldly on all new schemes and plans; to repulse any effort I might make, and tell me to content myself with a quiet country gentleman's life at Rockdeane, which would not suit me at all. However, we shall see. I do hope," he again repeated, "that Rosie and you will grow to know each other and like each other. She is about your age, I imagine—eighteen."

Irene smiled. "I am twenty-four—many years older; and I don't think ——." She paused.

"You don't think you would like her?"

"No; though of course I can't tell till I see her; but I was thinking it was not very probable she would like me."

"She will prefer the Miss Tilletts, and so on—I can't remember any more Rodham names; I shall learn them soon enough. If I know Rosie, she won't."

Irene made no answer. Randal was sleeping heavily on her shoulder, and her arm was very tired with holding him in his position. Sir Philip had apparently resigned himself to Misty's sluggish pace, and showed no inclination to hurry her. So they dragged slowly through the streets of Rodham, passed the Cathedral, and turned towards Eccleston Square.

"Our drive is nearly at an end now, Miss Clifford," Sir Philip said. "Next time I am charioteer I hope it will be behind a better steed than poor old Misty, and that you will have a more luxurious seat. You must be very tired, holding that heavy child."

"Yes, I am very tired," she answered, simply; and, as they stopped before the door of No. 9, she exclaimed, "There is Forster."

Mr. Williamson was just putting the key into the latch, when, hearing the wheels stop, he looked round.

"You, Irene, and Randal, and Sir Philip!"

"Even so, Mr. Williamson. The Fates have decreed that I should find your son hanging to a maple tree, in mid-air, and restore him to *terra firma*."

"Yes, and he has sprained his arm, Forster. Take care how you lift him down," said Irene. "Sir Philip saved his life."

Mr. Williamson was carrying the boy up the steps to the house, and Irene was standing on the pavement, Sir Philip by her side, the reins in one hand; the other he held out to Irene.

"Good-bye," she said. "Thank you so very much for all you have done."

"I hope I shall live to do more for you yet," was the answer, and, in another moment, Sir Philip had reseated himself, and Misty received so sharp a cut with the whip that she shook herself inquiringly, and waddled out of the square rather more quickly than she had come into it. Irene followed her brother slowly upstairs to the drawing-room; she knew that she should meet there a great storm of questions and reproofs, and a great many exclamations of surprise and wonder. Randal was on his mother's knee now, and she was asking him about his arm, and where it hurt him, and how it happened; while Cuthbert lay on his couch, his large eyes dilated with eager interest, and fixed upon his brother.

"Really, Irene, how excessively wrong it is of you to take these madly long walks. You must do everything in

extremes; you either poke about in all the dirty lanes and alleys, and run a fearful risk of exposing my children to infection, or you go immense walks, and come home late, and I endure agonies of suspense, and then you bring my boy at last with a broken arm."

"Come, come, Mary, there are no bones broken," said Mr. Williamson.

"And Aunt Irene couldn't help it, mother," Randal put in. "I ran after the rabbit, and then I went to get the blackberries, and ——"

"That is all very well, Randal; it is only a fresh instance of what I knew before, that mothers only are to be trusted with their children, and ——"

Irene had sat down by Cuthbert's side, and now, as the little thin hand was laid on hers, she took courage, and said, "Mary, will you let me tell you all that has happened. I am sorry we are so late, and that you have been anxious; but we have been delayed by this accident, and, though we drove home, it was at a very slow pace."

"Yes, and what a curious old gig you were in. I could hardly believe my own eyes, when I saw it at the door; but tell us all about it, Irene."

Irene told in a few words the history of Randal's fall, and how she had to hold him in a perilous position till Sir Philip appeared; then of Mr. Smith and the four-wheel carriage, to which Sir Philip had harnessed Misty, and the slow drive home.

"Really, how very peculiar. I hope you met no one you knew."

"I am afraid we met a great many people," said Irene, with an amused smile at the recollection of the grand carriages which had rolled past their humble conveyance.

"Who?" asked her sister anxiously; "for though they knew you, they would not know Sir Philip, and what must they have thought? Who did you meet?"

"We saw the Bishopstowe carriage, Mary, and the Tilletts', and Canon Horne's."

"How dreadfully unfortunate; and did you bow to any of the people?"

"Lady Eugenia bowed to me, and so did Mrs. Horne; the Tilletts only looked at us, and seemed so much gratified, that I am quite glad they should have the pleasure."

"The Tilletts of all people—the others are bad enough—only they might think none the worse of you for being in such a carriage; but those intolerable stuck-up Tilletts! Well, Irene, I hope you have had a lesson! Now, my dear Randy, you must come to the nursery, and let me see the extent of your injury, and if it will be necessary to send for Mr. Bradford."

"Nonsense, Mary, I don't think the boy is much amiss; pray don't be sending for a doctor without need, we have too many of his visits already," said her husband.

Cuthbert's small fingers tightened their grasp of Irene's, and she understood what he meant.

"But they must want their tea, Mary," Mr. Williamson called after her, as she left the room with Randal. "They have not had anything but blackberries since dinner at one o'clock."

"Oh, yes, we have," said Irene; "Mrs. Smith, the bailiff's wife, supplied us with wine and cake; such good cake, Cuthbert."

"Was it? I am glad of that; and, Auntie, do you really mean that Randal wanted to get the blackberries for me?"

"Yes, Cuthbert, that was in his mind; but he ought not to have gone down the path. I distinctly told him he must not go."

"Poor Randal, he only forgot; I am certain, if I could go everywhere, take long scampers, and gather blackberries, I should find it very hard not to forget. I shut my eyes, and tried to see it all, when you were telling mother just now. It was grand of Sir Philip to come and save Randal, but it was much, much grander of you to hold him so long. I know Sir Philip thinks so, I hope I shall see him again soon; I like him very much, don't you? Go to tea now, Auntie, I hear mother calling you; never mind, if what she says seems cross, for you know it has been a long time to wait, and it got dark, and Hilda went to bed, and of course we couldn't help wondering where you could be."

"Of course not, dear. Yes, Mary, I am coming;" and with a kiss pressed upon the pale forehead of her little nephew, Irene ran downstairs.

"Where is Randal?

"Gone to bed, of course. Nurse thinks his arm is seriously hurt, and I shall send for Mr. Bradford to-morrow."

Mrs. Williamson was pouring out a cup of very weak cold tea, as she spoke, and was evidently much aggrieved.

"She has some right to be," Irene said to herself, and then aloud, "I am really very sorry, Mary, that I went so far this afternoon with Randal, and that you have been anxious."

"*Have* been! I *am* anxious; with my eldest child a hopeless invalid, it is very hard to think that Randal may never have the use of his arm again, and all through the most flagrant ——"

"Disobedience" was on Irene's lips, but she forbore. After a minute's pause, Mrs. Williamson continued,

"And what did Sir Philip say? Did you find him easy to get on with? It was a very awkward position for you to put yourself in, driving home with a perfect stranger, or at least a man you never saw till yesterday."

"I did not find it awkward; it was a great deal more awkward to be hanging over the steep rock, holding Randal's arm."

"You are very silly, Irene; you never will talk like a reasonable person. I don't believe you feel in the slightest degree how embarrassing it will be when Lady Eugenia asks you who you were driving with in that dreadful old vehicle; really, when I saw it turn into the square, I could scarcely help laughing, miserably anxious as I was. And the Tilletts, too, to see you! By-the-bye, old Mrs. Thornycroft, Mr. Tillett's aunt, and those three plain daughters, were here this afternoon, she was very full of Sir Philip Dennistoun. They were in the same steamer with him on the Lake of Geneva, when the news of Sir Jasper's death was made known to him by the 'Times.' They have been a tour, as usual, and would not have come back so soon, Mrs. Thornycroft said, only her husband telegraphed that he was very ill, and they must return immediately. They implied that the old man was not so ill as he represented himself to be. They came here simply to find out all that could be found out about Sir Philip Dennistoun. Margaret Thornycroft talked like an idiot about him, and said she had been so struck with Sir Philip's appearance; it is quite easy to see what she will drive at. I know it will be perfectly disgust-

ing, the set Rodham people will make on Sir Philip. I think I must go to Randal, now. Forster is gone to dine at Dr. Simpson's; he asked him to-day, when they returned from the funeral together. Old Dr. Simpson is terribly sly. I do hope Forster will be cautious.

"I should think Forster is to be trusted," said Irene quietly; and then she followed her sister upstairs, and went to her own room; a small room at the top of the house, with two narrow windows, and no great attraction about it.

But Irene liked the elevation. She liked to be nearer the sky, and above the square—removed from the noise of the town. She was very tired; and it was not till she lay down upon her bed that she knew how tired, nor how great the strain had been upon her, for the boy and she had been face to face with death. She knew a fall of sixty feet on the large boulders, which checked the course of the stream immediately below, and over which Sir Philip had stepped so lightly and so rapidly when he came to their rescue, would have been mutilation if not death. Then came the thought, that no one had given any thanks for her preservation; that none in that house had even thought of her especial deliverance; all interest having centred in the boy; and, except from Cuthbert, she had received no tender word of inquiry or sympathy. Once, she had been everything to a mother, between whom and herself had existed a tie, half-sisterly, half-maternal, which only very few women can understand. It is a tie which is not frequent; but when it exists, is stronger than death; and when severed, leaves the survivor very desolate. Mary had married early, and she and her husband had settled in a town in one of the

Midland counties, far from the home, in a Devonshire village, where Irene and her mother had been happy for years.

Mr. Balfour, the agent and man of business of Sir Jasper Dennistoun, was a relation of Forster Williamson. He had a high opinion of his abilities and integrity, and two years before the time of which I write, the offer of a partnership had been made and accepted; and the Williamsons removed to Rodham. Almost immediately afterwards, Mrs. Clifford caught a cold, which ended in congestion of the lungs, and she sank in a few days.

Irene was left alone in the world, and her brother-in-law's offer of a home in his house seemed one she ought not to refuse.

Cuthbert, the lame boy, had been an especial favourite of his grandmother's, and he had often spent months with her and his aunt Irene at Orchard Leigh, before his hip disease had so completely laid him prostrate. To minister to him, and brighten his suffering young life, seemed to Irene an aim in the first days of her mourning; and she went to Rodham to fulfil her mission, and forget herself and her sorrow in service—that great panacea for wounded hearts, if they would but try to take it. And she was peaceful and content. Within her lay a deep spring of love, which was never dry. Hers was a faithful unquestioning soul, and it looked through her clear stedfast eyes far beyond earthly vexations and perplexities.

Of women like Irene it is hard to write; they are not generally very caressing and effusive in their manner. Sometimes even abrupt and reserved, they do not take a prominent place amongst the "popular people" of their own particular circle. We think we have known them

for years, and we find we never knew them at all. Then some sudden flash of tenderness, some great act of devotion and self-sacrifice, some burst of sympathy in sorrow, some gleam of brightness which dazzles us with its lustre, and they stand revealed before us. Alas, alas! sometimes, in the bitterness of our soul, we hear but the rustle of the wings, as "the angel of the house" passes from our sight for ever.

CHAPTER V.

GLIMPSES OF RODHAM SOCIETY.

"So I left the place, and weary,
Fainting, yet with hope sustained,
Toiled through pathways long and dreary,
Till the mountain-top was gained.
Lo! the height that I had taken,
As so shining from below—
Was a desolate, forsaken
Region of perpetual snow."

A. A. Procter.

In the course of a few months the aspect of Rockdeane was changed. If its outward walls still frowned above the babbling stream, and rose dark and grim amidst the universal greenness of spring, within there was a brightness and freshness which charmed the eyes of the many guests who flocked thither to pay their respects to Sir Philip and Mrs. Dennistoun, now that they were settled in their new home.

Mrs. Dennistoun had received her stepson's orders to superintend the decoration and beautifying of this old home of his ancestors with a glad heart. There was only one stipulation made, which Mrs. Dennistoun tried in vain to overrule. The tradesmen employed were to be Rodham tradesmen. Everything

was to be ordered and procured through them, and there was to be no departure from this rule. But Mrs. Dennistoun had confidence in her own taste, and managed to make the Rodham tradesmen subservient to her will.

Undoubtedly the interior arrangements of Rockdeane were a grand success, and no one turned away from a visit there without acknowledging it. And now, in the early summer succeeding Sir Philip's accession to the title, the new order of things was established, and Rosie flitted hither and thither about the old house in all the joyousness of her youth, and Mrs. Dennistoun stepped into her handsome carriage and drove into Rodham with the ease of a person to whom such a luxury had been habitual, and was not lately acquired.

Jasper had his own pony, and everything which befitted his position. His name had been put down for Eton, and he was to take his place in a master's house there in September.

Sir Philip, himself, had also fitted into the niche appointed him with wonderful facility. A true-hearted gentleman is never in any danger of elation from a change in his worldly position. If, instead of counting a few hundreds as his yearly income, he counts thousands, he bears it with the grace and refined dignity which would have characterized him had the reverse of the picture been his. He is the same in his manners to others when he sits on a stool in a dingy office in a threadbare coat, as he is in a lordly mansion, raised high in the social scale by what we call the accident of rank and fortune. Such a man is made of too fine a stuff to give himself airs in the one case, or to be meanspirited and cringing in the other.

In Mrs. Dennistoun there was perceptible a little

touch of elation which she could not always conceal. It was seen in little condescensions and patronizing manners to the townspeople of Rodham, and a little too much empressement towards the county families amongst whom she came to take her place with her son and daughter; but in Philip's presence she was very careful that there should be no display of these small weaknesses, for her stepson's indignation was always moved by them, and he came down upon Jasper with a pitiless severity when he heard him indulging in big talk to any boys with whom he associated.

It was a lovely afternoon in May when some visitors were assembled on the terrace at Rockdeane. A piece of ground had been turfed and prepared for croquet in the front of the house, and Jasper was setting up the hoops for Rosie, who had proposed a game with the juvenile part of the said visitors, who had arrived without invitation, but had been warmly pressed by Mrs. Dennistoun to stay to tea.

The party consisted of the Bishop's wife, and her niece, Lady Eugenia Le Marchant, and Mrs. Tillett, the banker's wife, her two daughters and her son, a boy about Jasper's age.

Most of the county families were in London at this time of the year; but the Tilletts did not aspire to the dignity of a house in Town, and the quiet and gentle Lady Catharine Weston preferred her own lovely home in the summer to the gaieties of the great Metropolis; and as her niece had not been very strong, and the doctors had desired that she might be kept from all overexcitement, and late hours should be avoided, there was no necessity for her aunt to break through her habit this year, and give up the pleasure of her flowers in their full

prime, and the delights of the country which she so thoroughly enjoyed.

"I am so glad that we were at home," Mrs. Dennistoun was saying. "Rosie and I had to get through some shopping this morning, and we felt disinclined to move this afternoon; the Bishop is in London, I think."

"Yes; he wanted to be in the House to-night for the debate; but he will be at home again by Sunday."

"What a lovely girl your niece is," Mrs. Dennistoun said.

"Yes, poor child! she is very pretty," was the reply; "but I wish I could see a little more of the spring and elasticity of youth about her. I always think the sorrows of her family, in the midst of which she was born, have left their traces upon her. My poor brother died from the effects of an accident just before Eugenia was born, and her only sister soon after. Her mother was broken-hearted—if any woman ever was—and she did not live long; and then the child came to us. My husband kindly allowed me to receive her, and she is like our own."

"I am sure she must be," said Mrs. Dennistoun; "and she is a sweet, attractive creature."

"Yes, indeed," chimed in Mrs. Tillett; "my girls are devoted to her. May and she have so much in common. Your daughter is pretty, Mrs. Dennistoun, and so bright and merry."

The three elder ladies were pacing the terrace now, and at the corner, whence there was a view of the drive, Mrs. Dennistoun paused.

"There are more visitors, for here is another carriage."

Mrs. Tillett, who was short-sighted, put her glass to her eye.

"It is only a fly. Some of the Rodham people, I think, Mrs. Dennistoun. I suppose you are besieged with them."

"Oh! I am very happy to receive their visits, I am sure," was the answer. "It is meant civilly. Rosie!" her mother called, "do you know where Philip is? Here are some more people arriving. Do go and see if he is in his study."

"Yes, mamma," Rosie answered; "but just wait till I have finished this turn."

In another minute a servant appeared, one of the footmen, who now assisted old Forrest in his labours.

"Mrs. Williamson and Miss Clifford are in the drawing-room, Ma'am," the man said, approaching his mistress.

A shadow passed over Mrs. Dennistoun's face, but she went on with what she was saying at the moment to Lady Catharine. Within, the thought was passing—"How tiresome and awkward. Of course, the Williamsons do not know Lady Catharine, most likely not Mrs. Tillett either." Then, aloud, she said, "You must excuse me for a few minutes. I must go into the drawing-room. Will you sit here, or"——. But Mrs. Dennistoun had not time to finish her sentence, for from the window, which had been opened from the small drawing-room on to the terrace, four figures were seen advancing—Sir Philip, with two ladies and a boy. Mrs. Williamson was a little disconcerted by the sight of Mrs. Tillett, but recovered herself; and, feeling she was under good escort, came on with a smile towards Mrs. Dennistoun. Mrs. Tillett became immediately engrossed in a discussion about a geranium which grew in one of the ornamental vases which now stood at regular intervals at the edge of the terrace, while Rosie came running up from the

croquet-ground to greet Irene, who was rather behind, with Randal.

"You are just in time for our game," she said. "Philip, will you play too? Then we shall have such much better sides."

"My dear Rosie," her mother interposed, "Miss Clifford may not like to detain her carriage for a long game of croquet. How do you do, Miss Clifford?" was supplemented; and then, "What a fine little fellow; is that your nephew?"

"Of course, mamma, it is Randal," Rosie again interposed. "Philip brought him up here to play with Jasper not long ago. I don't know where Jasper is now, but he is gone off with Frederick Tillett. Do come, Philip."

"My dear Rosie!" her mother interrupted, "you are so impetuous. One would think the fate of the world depended on this game of croquet. Will you not sit down, Miss Clifford?"

"Miss Clifford will play croquet, I hope," Philip said, turning from Lady Catharine and Mrs. Tillett, with whom he had been exchanging a few pleasant words. "We will leave Mrs. Williamson with you, and betake ourselves to the croquet. As to you, Randal, you must go and look after Jasper and the other boy. You will most likely find them in the region of the stable-yard. Jasper is sure to be exhibiting Zoe to his friend. Run round the house, to the left there, and you will see the stables. You went with me the last time you were here; you know the way."

The boy scampered off, and his mother, who had been invited by Lady Catharine to take a vacant chair by her, was well satisfied. She saw that Mrs. Dennistoun had been defeated, and she could endure Mrs. Tillett's scarcely

well-bred scrutiny and silence while Lady Catharine was so friendly and pleasant.

"Now, Miss Clifford," Sir Philip said, "we go down these steps to the croquet ground."

But Irene paused. "Are you going to stay, Mary?"

"Oh, yes! as Mrs. Dennistoun kindly proposes it. We have dismissed the fly, you know, and intend to walk home."

"You need not do that," said Lady Catharine. "I shall be happy to take you into Rodham, if you will allow me to do so."

"Thank you so very much," was Mrs. Williamson's pleased reply; and Irene turned away with Sir Philip without another word. There was some consultation as to the sides at croquet, and on which Sir Philip should be enlisted. Mary and Helen Tillett both disclaimed any skill in the game, and Lady Eugenia said she could only act under direction, and hoped her side would not depend on her.

"Miss Clifford, you have not expressed any opinion as to your powers. Are you a feeble or a 'strong hand'?"

"I used to play very well, I believe," said Irene; "but I have not had much practice this year."

"Neither have I," said Philip; "but, like you, I am not at all disposed to take such a low view of my own powers; so, without further discussion, I propose that you take one side and I the other, and let these young ladies choose between us."

"Most decidedly not," said Rosie, laughing; "it is you and Irene who must choose us."

It was curious to notice how, in the general clatter and confusion of tongues, Irene took her mallet, and

quietly said, "Miss Dennistoun and Miss Tillett, will you play on my side?"

Thus Sir Philip was left with Lady Eugenia and the younger Miss Tillett, an arrangement which was evidently anything but agreeable to her sister. Helen was, however, so well contented, that the game began vigorously, and was carried through with much spirit, ending in one of those close contests which are always the charm of a game of croquet. Irene and Rosie were both good players, and their side came off conquerors, just as a servant came down the flight of steps from the terrace to announce that Mrs. Dennistoun wished to know whether Sir Philip would have tea brought down to the ground or whether he would come up to the terrace.

"We will come up, I think." And, seeing that Lady Eugenia looked tired, he gave her his arm, and said, "I am afraid you ought to have had some refreshment before."

"Oh, no," she answered, and looked up at him with a smile.

Lady Eugenia was very fair, and her eyes were of the softest grey, fringed with dark lashes. Her figure was tall, and she stooped a little, which added to the general air of delicacy which seemed to cling to her. By Rosie's bright and radiant girlhood her beauty was somewhat faint, and she had a languid air about her which might either arise from indolence or ill-health. But she was attractive with an attraction of her own—gentle and sensitive, but by no means wanting in intellectual power. She had read a great deal more than most girls of her age, and thought over what she had read. It was not the first time that she and Philip had met; and it was not the first time that he had found her con-

versation pleasant, when, after partaking of the fragrant tea served on the prettiest of afternoon tea-sets, and supplemented with some beautiful grapes, he strolled with her into the newly-built greenhouse, which had been stocked with lovely geraniums, and which promised in time to be one of the most brilliant conservatories in the neighbourhood.

"I cannot think how you have managed to get everything so pretty here in so short a time," Lady Eugenia was saying. "It is like coming to a castle in a fairy tale, transformed by a magician's wand."

"I can take no credit for the arrangements," Sir Philip said; "Mrs. Dennistoun has done everything for me; and Rosie, I have no doubt, has had her word in the matter of ornament. Sometimes I am a little afraid that old Rockdeane has been too much brightened to suit its ancient character."

"I suppose you will stand for the county if this vacancy occurs, which seems probable, if Mr. Senhurst resigns from ill-health?"

"I have not thought much about it," Philip answered; "I have had so much to do in winding up my old life and starting the new. There is a great deal to be done amongst the tenantry, and I want to build them a church, and restore Hildyard's Alms Chapel."

"Just like the pattern hero in Miss Yonge's stories."

The young voice had a tone in it which was not pleasant—half satirical, and almost contemptuous, as she went on: "I would rather get a seat in Parliament, if I were you, than devote my energies to beautifying a musty chapel for old men and women, which does well enough as it is. I should do such great things if I were in your place: everything seems within your reach." Her en-

thusiasm had changed the expression of her face, and her manner was no longer languid and dreamy.

"You would be ambitious," Philip responded. "You are ambitious, as it is."

"I don't know," she said, relapsing into her usually quiet and gentle manner; "I don't know that I am. I like that little person whom the Tillett faction are trying to snub so unsuccessfully. It is delicious to see how she defeats them at every turn. Irene Clifford—is not that her name? By-the-bye, do you remember when we passed you with her and a little boy in an antique vehicle last autumn?"

"Yes," said Philip, shortly; "I remember it very well."

He did remember it; but a great gulf seemed to be set between that time and this. In the few months of transition between Rockdeane and the London home, Philip had often been at the Williamsons'. Hilda and Cuthbert did not look upon him as a stranger, and gradually he and Irene had slipped into the easy familiar intercourse of friends. Then, since the establishment at Rockdeane had been formed, and Sir Philip was absolutely settled there as its master, a change had come. Just one of those imperceptible changes which we fail to trace to their source, which we cannot put into words, but which exist, nevertheless.

As Sir Philip and Lady Eugenia wandered away on this particular afternoon, Irene's eyes followed them. Rosie had to divide her attentions to her with the Miss Tilletts, and every one knows that the management of such a position requires some tact.

May and Helen Tillett talked about things and people of which they felt sure Irene knew nothing, and Rosie,

who liked Irene as her brother had prophesied she would like her, felt the ill-bred manners of her guests, without knowing exactly how to counteract them. She only hoped that the Tilletts would go before Mrs. Williamson did, and thus let her have Irene to herself for a little while.

At last the girls wandered back to the terrace again, and Lady Catharine looked at her watch.

"We have a long drive home, and I think we ought to be starting. When will you come out to Bishop's Court, Mrs. Dennistoun?"

"I shall be delighted to come. I don't think we have any engagements this week," was the reply.

"Will you come to-morrow, as the weather is so fine, and bring your son and daughter with you? Ah! here are Sir Philip and Genie at last. Come, my dear, we must order the carriage; and we are to take you, Mrs. Williamson, and your little boy, and Miss Clifford."

"Where are the boys?" Rosie said. "I wonder they did not return to tea."

"I told Forrest to take care of them," Mrs. Dennistoun said; "they went to have a little cricket practice in the west park. Forrest was to let them have some lemonade and cake in the summer-house, if they liked it better than tea. Ah! here is Randal."

"Well, Randal, what is the matter?" Rosie exclaimed.

Randal's cheeks were very red, and he came slowly onwards to the place where Irene stood.

"Have you had your tea?"

"I have had nothing," said Randal shortly; "and I don't want anything."

"Hush, Randal," interposed his mother; "don't speak in that way."

"Not had any tea!" exclaimed Mrs. Dennistoun; "how could that be?"

"They did not ask me," said Randal again; "I did not play with them either, and I did not want to."

"Oh! if you are a naughty boy," said his mother, "I cannot speak to you; I am quite shocked."

The announcement of Lady Catharine's carriage was quite a relief, and Rosie walked with Irene and Randal round the house to the entrance-door.

"I am sorry I have seen so little of you this afternoon," Rosie was saying; "do come and spend a day with me soon. To-morrow, I heard mamma say, she would go to Bishop's Court; but on Saturday, will you come? A real long day I mean, not a fictitious one, beginning with afternoon tea; although this afternoon has been long enough, if it did not begin till four o'clock," Rosie added; "and I am sure it must have been dreadfully dull for you. Philip is so engrossed with Lady Eugenia; and I have had to be engrossed, whether I liked it or not, with the Tilletts. You don't know them."

"They don't know me," said Irene with a low musical laugh. "Have you never heard that Mrs. Tillett professes to know no one in Rodham, except the Cathedral clergy, and her husband's aunt, old Mrs. Thornycroft."

"What nonsense; when bankers could not make their money without the town, and they are indebted to all the shopkeepers in the place for carrying their savings to them."

"That does not matter; the Tilletts have a country house, or a house out of Rodham, and so have the Robinsons and the Blacks, and that matters a great deal."

"Well, you will come on Saturday?" were Rosie's last words; and then Irene took her seat opposite her sister, in the Bishop's carriage, while Randal sat between her and Lady Eugenia, with whom Sir Philip seemed to have a great many parting words to exchange.

"Do you like Lady Eugenia better than you used to do, Philip?" Rosie asked, as they rejoined the Tilletts.

"Like her, yes; I admire her too! Moreover, she is rather easier to talk to than most young ladies."

"So it seems," said Rosie playfully; "well, I suppose there must be a Lady Dennistoun some day, and if a Christian name comes in euphoniously it may as well be Eugenia as any other."

"Don't distract your little brain about that, Rosie; leave the subject to older heads to settle. But how long are these eternal illetts going to stay?"

"Percy is gone to call the boys. Jasper and Frederick Tillett have been playing cricket in the west park."

"I wish I had known that; I would have gone to look them up."

"I beg your pardon, Sir," said the old butler, approaching Sir Philip, as Rosie went in to the drawing-room; "but I feel it is my duty to speak to you concerning the young gentlemen."

"What young gentlemen, Forrest?"

"Mr. Jasper, Sir, and Mr. Tillett. They have behaved scandalous, Sir, and unbecoming their position, to Master Williamson, this afternoon."

"What do you mean?" asked Philip, again.

"Well, Sir Philip, it ain't to be supposed that Percy or James would be over nice in their language; but Percy came to me, and, says he, that young gentleman is having

a time of it down there, Mr. Forrest, Lawyer Williamson's son I mean, and as fine a boy of nine as you may see. They would not so much as speak to him, and when he tried to join the game, they called him names. I'd be ashamed to hear from the lowest of the low such bad words, Sir Philip. The poor little fellow held up as brave as a lion ; but when he took a glass of lemonade, Master Tillett pinched his arm—not for fun you know—but in a nasty sneering way, and when he turned to leave them, they shouted after him that he was a sneak, and had better go and tell his mammy."

"Call Percy here," Sir Philip said, in a voice so stern that old Forrest felt he had roused the lion in his master.

Percy substantiated what Forrest had said ; and the story was even worse. Then, as the two boys were seen coming across the park to give a tardy answer to the summons sent for them again and again, from the cricket field, Philip shouted, "Jasper."

Jasper turned ; "Hallo ! what's the row ?" Then his brother repeated the call, "Jasper."

Jasper turned, and shrugged his shoulder at his companion, and came to a dead halt.

"Will you come here, sir," Philip repeated, "and bring your friend with you."

Both boys now came, seeing Philip was in earnest ; and though Jasper muttered, "Bother it," and Frederick Tillett whispered, "What does he want ?" they followed Philip across the wide hall to the study ; the same where old Sir Jasper had sat for so many years, where the huge old black cabinet containing his papers and letters still stood, and where Philip had thought over the probable details of that lonely life on the first night of his arrival in Rockdeane.

"Jasper," Sir Philip said, facing the boys when he entered the room, "shut the door. I have heard from Forrest and another of my servants that you have thought fit to disgrace me this afternoon by the way you have treated a boy who was a guest of mine, and to whom you owed courtesy——"

"Little sneak!" Jasper managed to put in; "he deserves to be thrashed."

"I beg your pardon," said Sir Philip; "I think your deserts, and your friend's also, rather lie in that direction. The manly little fellow made no complaint; but I hear that your conduct was so disgraceful, and the language you used so detestable, that even one of the servants remonstrated with you. I brought you here before your friend to say this, that he also might know how hard I find it to overlook an offence like this. With Mr. Frederick Tillett I have no concern, except to beg that, if he honours me with his presence here again, he will behave as a gentleman should. With you, Jasper, I am concerned, and intimately concerned, too. You bear my name, and I do not intend you to disgrace it if I can help it. You must go to your own room for the rest of to-day, and to-morrow you will, if you please, walk down into Rodham, and apologise to Randal Williamson for your conduct. If your friend has any feeling of a gentleman about him, he will do the same."

"Little snob! I am sure I shan't," said Frederick Tillett; "who cares about the Williamsons? My father and mother don't visit them."

"I am not asking you to enlighten me as to your father and mother's visiting list, sir, nor do I wish to continue this conversation with you. Jasper, will you obey me at once, and go to your room?"

Jasper was pale with anger; but, from long experience, he knew Philip meant what he said. He turned sullenly away, and Sir Philip strode out of the room.

"My dear boy, how long you have kept us waiting!" was Mrs. Tillett's greeting to her son. "Mrs. Dennistoun must be quite tired of us."

"And where is Jasper? What have you done with Jasper?" Mrs. Dennistoun asked, anxiously.

"He has had a row with Sir Philip, I believe," was the answer. "I am going to drive you home, mamma."

"No, my dear boy, certainly not," was the maternal reply; but it only fell upon the wind.

Master Frederick mounted the box, and left the inside of the carriage to his mother and sisters, while he snatched the reins from the coachman, and drove off at a swift pace.

"What was all the fuss about, with Sir Philip and Jasper Dennistoun?" asked Mrs. Tillett, when she had resigned herself to her son's self-willed determination. "I hope you had nothing to do with it."

"Oh, no; only some shindy about that little snob, young Williamson."

"Oh, was that all? But the Dennistouns make a great deal of them; they are new yet in the neighbourhood, and will find out that it does not do to ask people to meet who do not visit each other. It is excessively awkward."

"Mrs. Dennistoun did not ask us to meet the Williamsons nor Lady Catharine either, mamma," said May Tillett; "she could not help our all fixing on the same afternoon to go out to Rockdeane."

"No," said Helen; "and really, mamma, Lady Catharine seems very fond of the Williamsons, too."

"Oh, you know, officially the Bishop is obliged to

know Mr. Williamson; he transacts some of the law business of the diocese, as Mr. Balfour did before him."

"I have heard," said Helen Tillett again, "that little Miss Clifford had hopes at one time of being Lady Dennistoun; so Margaret Thornycroft said."

"These hopes were sufficiently crushed to-day, I should think," said her sister. "Not that I believe Sir Philip really means anything by his attentions to Lady Eugenia."

Mrs. Tillett, who was lying back in her carriage, and smiling with the air of conscious superiority as it rolled past the foot-passengers in the High-street on its way to her country residence, said emphatically, "No, I do not think he does. Sir Philip is not a man to marry at all; he is no longer young; considerably over thirty, I should think; but the Peerage will soon enlighten us about his age. Freddie, my dear boy, do give the reins into Thomas's hands; we shall very likely meet your father when we turn into the Rose Mount road."

And, moved to obedience by the thought of what his father might say or do, if he saw him driving that pair of handsome spirited bays, Master Frederick Tillett consented to let Thomas resume their management, as the pointed gables of the country-house of which Mrs. Tillett was so proud came in sight.

The Bishop's carriage stopped before the Williamsons' house in Eccleston Square about seven o'clock.

Mrs. Williamson was in good spirits, and tripped lightly upstairs to the drawing-room, saying,—

"We have had such a delightful afternoon at Rockdeane. Well, dear Cuthbert, how are you; and where is Hilda?"

"Hilda is gone out with father. It was such a fine evening, nurse said she might. We had our tea at six

o'clock. Papa thought you would not be home until late. But did you walk all the way, Auntie, are you tired?"

Irene had seated herself by Cuthbert's couch, and laid her head against his pillow. She had taken off her hat; and a certain weariness about her struck the child. He was ever quick to discern a shadow of a cloud in Irene.

"Did you walk all the way home, Auntie?"

"No, dear; Lady Catharine Weston brought us in her carriage."

"Oh! what fun for Randal. Where is he? Did he drive on the box?"

"Certainly not," said his mother; "that was not at all likely. But it has really been a great treat for us all; and I can't imagine what has made you so dull and silent, Irene."

"I have not been at all dull," said Irene. "The country on a day like this is quite enough pleasure in itself to me."

"Well, you have been very silent then. If you were annoyed at Sir Philip devoting himself to Lady Eugenia, you know it is your own fault; I warned you again and again that he would get tired of your cold manner."

Irene's usually serene, untroubled eyes, flashed as she looked up at her sister.

"Mary, I cannot think what you mean, and I beg you will not speak to me like that again; nor can I understand why—"

She stopped. Her tone was an angry one; and Irene acknowledged to herself that by showing the irritation she was injuring her own cause.

"You *do* understand me perfectly," her sister continued; "you know what I mean; and I repeat, I think you have been very provoking, and very foolish too."

Cuthbert's large eyes—so like his aunt's—were raised pleadingly to his mother, but Irene's were cast down now; and when—as her sister left the room—she looked at Cuthbert, they were dim with tears.

"I am getting so silly, Cuthbert," she said; "and worse, naughty, too."

"No, never that," said the child, eagerly. "But, Auntie, I don't think you are well. You ought to have my port wine, and jellies, and things, and get up your strength, as Dr. Simpson says."

Irene kissed the little thin caressing hand she held in hers, and said,—

"Shall you and I go to Orchard Leigh together this summer? I want to go and see all the dear old places again—and grandmamma's grave. If your papa and mamma go to Switzerland, I think it would be so nice if you and I, and nurse and Randal, and Hilda could go to Devonshire."

"Oh, beautiful! Jollier than anything; only I am so lame, and I should be such a trouble to get about at the station; and it is a long, long way."

"Well, it is only a dream of mine," said Irene; "we must ask Papa, and we must see if we can afford it. Here they come."

And Mr. Williamson appeared at the door with Hilda, who was full of delight at the honour of a walk alone with her father, and who looked like a little fairy in her pretty white hat with its wreath of daisies, and her short white frock with its blue sash.

"Well; you came back in grand style from Rockdeane, I hear," was Mr. Williamson's exclamation. "But Randal seems in low spirits. I found him munching bread and butter in the dining-room, and I can't get a word out of him."

"He missed his tea, somehow," Irene said. "Something went wrong with him and Jasper I think; and that very objectionable boy, Frederick Tillett, was there."

"Those poor Tilletts," said Mr. Williamson, laughing; "they get no mercy in this house! How was it Randal was starved in that land of plenty, at Rockdeane?"

"I think I will go and look after him," said Irene, "if you will stay here; and I can take Hilda to nurse."

Hilda resisted; but a second "Come, Hilda," from Irene, made her obedient at once.

When Irene got to the nursery, she found Randal there. He was leaning over the bars of the window, and kicking his "knickerbockered legs" against the window seat.

"Randal, why did you get no tea at Rockdeane?"

"There was lemonade, and wine, and cake, and—what do you call it—claret cup, which Jasper ordered, not tea at all!"

"Well, you might have had some, of whatever it was; and yet you say you are hungry."

"So I am," said Randal, shortly. "I'll never go to Rockdeane again, I know. I hate that Jasper. Oh, I wish I was as old as I am big, and wouldn't I pitch into him!"

"Why, Randal, what can he have said?"

"Horrid boy! But I am not a sneak and a snob, as he says I am; and I shan't tell tales, Auntie"—and the handsome, honest face turned full on Irene. "I believe Jasper Dennistoun and that other boy are as bad as they can be; and Sir Philip never cares."

"I am sure he would care, if he knew anything was wrong."

"He does know; for Percy and James, the footmen, said

they would tell him, for the words were so.....there, I shall be telling you all if I go on, so I will shut up; only, Auntie, I am sure Sir Philip is not so nice as he used to be. Don't you remember how often he came here before they all lived at Rockdeane; and how we went walks with him; and how he let me ride his horse one day; and that afternoon—an age ago—when he saved me from falling into the river. He is not one bit like the same man."

Irene did not answer at once. Something in her heart echoed the boy's words, "He is not one bit the same." Perhaps she was not the same, either. The foolish, not to say sinful, bantering of silly tongues had done its work. Her sister had repeated to her the gossip which reached her and pleased her, that Irene was Sir Philip's attraction in Mr. Williamson's house; that it was said in Rodham that he paid her great attention, and that, if she chose, she might soon be Lady Dennistoun.

Then Mary's delight was so unbounded at the bare idea, that she was more than ever anxious to pay Sir Philip court; and she kept a sharp look-out upon Irene, that she should dress becomingly, and always be free from any of her engagements with the poor when Sir Philip was likely to come.

At first, after a long season of barrenness in her life—after many months passed without an exchange of thought and feeling with those with whom she lived, Irene had given herself up to enjoy, in her single-hearted, earnest way, Sir Philip's friendship. All his stories of Alpine feats and Alpine life in his many autumn wanderings, were eagerly listened to. All his rough but bold sketches in numerous little oblong books were

entered into and appreciated. Humorous portraits of fellow-travellers in all kinds of odd positions, interiors of chalets, decks of steamboats, were all represented in a bold, masterly manner; and many a pleasant hour had thus passed, which had lightened little Cuthbert's burden of pain and helplessness as he turned over page after page of these little sketch-books, which showed that Philip's vein of the ludicrous was at least as strong as his appreciation of the grand and the beautiful.

But this pleasant condition of things could not last. One afternoon, after many hints and foolish jests had made Irene sufficiently uncomfortable, she was watching Cuthbert's enjoyment of one of Sir Philip's sketch-books, as she sat by him at work, when the door opened, and Margaret Thornycroft and her sister were announced.

Irene rose to greet them, and, as she did so, another of the sketch-books fell from her lap. It was one which instinctively she felt Margaret must not see; for there were several clever little groups, which were too decided portraits to be mistaken, and under which had been written, "Hen and Chickens," in Philip's peculiar handwriting, which leaned from right to left, and when once seen could not be forgotten. The book opened as it fell; and a bold mountain scene, touched with colour, lay uppermost.

"Oh! what is that? How lovely. I am sure it is Zermatt. Do let me look. Is that your sketch?"

"No," said Irene, finding it in vain to attempt to parry the question; and she held the book for Margaret to see.

"That is Sir Philip Dennistoun's writing, I am certain," exclaimed her sister, trying to turn over another leaf.

"Of course it is," Margaret said; "let me look through the book, please."

But Irene closed it, and tied the strings which fastened it.

"I dare say Sir Philip will show you some of his sketches himself one day; he has a great many larger and more finished ones than these. These are what he calls his scribbles, and I think I had better not exhibit them."

The two Miss Thornycrofts looked at each other. "Oh, really, how very intimate you must be; but I shall meet Sir Philip to-night at a dinner party at my cousin's, Edward Tillett's, and I shall ask him to favour me with a sight of his sketch-books. I shall tell him you seem to think you have an especial right to the book—perhaps you have?"

"Sir Philip kindly lent them to us for Cuthbert's amusement, and——"

"Oh," said Margaret, with a disagreeable laugh, "I did not know a child would care for sketches of mountains and glaciers."

"There are a great many other things besides mountains—there are pictures of people," Cuthbert began, "and funny verses, and ——"

A serious look from his aunt stopped Cuthbert from saying any more; and for that time the danger was over, and the conversation took another turn.

But from that afternoon Irene's unconstrained intercourse with Sir Philip ceased.

Was it not possible that these silly rumours had reached Sir Philip's ear also? Nay; might it not be also possible that he thought, with the rest of the Rodham world, that she had entered into her sister's schemes, and that she

was not unwilling to let it be as that foolish world decreed? If ever her spirit was ruffled, and her indignation roused, it was now. Burning colour came into her face at the very thought; and it was only after a strong battle with herself that she determined to do her best to stop such gossip for the future, and to let Sir Philip see that she, at least, was not concerned in it.

But, like countless other women, Irene had by this very effort learned more of her own heart than she had known before. Like many another woman, she found that she was turning her face away from a dream of sweetness and pleasantness to a very stern and hard reality. But Irene's soul was strong to suffer and to endure; and, when once her mind was made up, there was no drawing back.

Sir Philip saw the change, but was very far from reading its cause. What he had thought of her in the old chapel of the Hildyards, when the September sunshine made a glory round her head, as it brightened the tablet erected by Dame Editha Dennistoun to the memory of her husband, so he would ever feel; she was something unlike and apart from the Tilletts, and the Thornycrofts, and the Le Marchants of the world; a woman who bore about with her the atmosphere of a higher and a nobler life, whose aims and hopes were not centred on the gaieties and follies of the little circle in which she moved; whose soul rose above the petty jealousies and envies and rivalries of others of her sex and age. Sir Philip felt that, with all his aspirations after greatness and nobility, with all his high standard of right to which he reached forward, he had not so firmly grasped what Irene held fast—the Faith which endures, as seeing Him who is invisible, and that in His Light she saw light, and in His Strength she was strong.

By an insensible influence, he had felt drawn by her towards the same goal. Kindred sympathies and kindred tastes seemed to bring him nearer to Irene every time he saw her, and then a change came—the change I have described,—and Sir Philip drifted away, as a man will sometimes drift, turning regretful glances backwards perhaps, but fancying that the brook of separation grew wider every day; he ceased, or imagined he ceased, even to wish to bridge it over, and turned his thoughts to another point of interest on the opposite bank of the stream.

"Take care, Randal," his mother called out, as the child looked at her for admiration; "be very steady."

"Yes, Mamma; good-bye, Auntie."

Irene smiled, and kissed her hand, as Sir Philip rode slowly away with the boy.

"Let me see the note, Irene," her sister said; "what is the plan Miss Dennistoun proposes?"

And Mrs. Williamson looked over Irene's shoulder at the open note.

"Yes! of course, she can come to luncheon on Sunday, and, of course, you will go to Rockdeane; it will be so nice for you. You must go, Irene."

"I don't know," Irene said, doubtfully.

"What nonsense, Irene; come in and write directly, and say, we shall be delighted to see Miss Dennistoun, and that you will go. You are the oddest girl."

"You seem very anxious to get rid of me for a week," Irene said. "Won't you come in?" she added, turning to Jasper; but Jasper said to himself, "That would be very slow;" and, resuming his grandest air now Sir Philip was gone, he said "he would go to a shop in Castle Street, where he wanted something, and return in a few minutes."

Irene turned into the dining-room, with her note, for a moment, and then ran upstairs. It was her habit to tell Cuthbert everything; and she had Rosie's note in her hand.

"What is all the talking about downstairs? Did I not hear Sir Philip Dennistoun's voice?"

"Yes, dear; he brought Jasper to apologize for something which happened at Rockdeane yesterday; and now Sir Philip has taken Randal a ride on Jasper's pony."

"He never comes up to see me now," said Cuthbert, fretfully. "He might have come to-day."

"He could not, darling. There were the horses to take care of, as he had no groom with them. But, look here, Cuthbert; I told you I was to go on Saturday, and spend the day with Miss Dennistoun. Now she wants me to go after service on Sunday, and stay for a week; but I don't think I want to go; it will be so long to leave you; and ——"

"Oh! never mind me, Auntie," the child said, with a great effort; "it will do you lots of good. Didn't I tell you, yesterday, you wanted things to make you strong; and you love the country, and you can be nice and quiet there, and have time to write your new story, and have ever so much to read to me when you come back."

"Well; I will go for a few days. As to my story, Cuthbert, it is nearly finished; and if I get the money I expect for it, you and I can go to Orchard Leigh in August, and have the quiet little house there I have set my mind upon."

"Oh, that will be splendid! But make haste and write the note, Auntie."

Irene went to the table, and wrote her answer—only a few lines—in her clear, decided hand. Her sister, who was getting anxious about the delay, came into the room just as the note was finished.

"That is a very cold acceptance, Irene, of such a kind invitation; and say more about our being glad to see Miss Dennistoun; and I think, also, you might end with something a little stronger than 'Yours sincerely.'"

Irene laughed. She did not often laugh; but when she did, it was always a sound that every one wanted to hear again.

"Oh! Mary; as if anything could be stronger. If we

are sincerely what we profess to be to people, what can be better? I never indulge in 'verys' and 'mosts,' and I abhor strokes of the pen to emphasize an adjective."

"I think, Irene," said Mrs. Williamson, really annoyed now, "that, if you do not take care, you will become very eccentric, and like an old maid. I contend that Rosie Dennistoun's is a very nice and kind note, and your reply is very ungracious."

"I cannot agree with you about the reply, though I do entirely agree with you about the invitation. But I hear the horses' feet, and I must address my envelope. Please take it down to Sir Philip, Mary."

"Don't you intend to take it yourself? You had much better."

"I am not afraid to trust it to you, if you don't mind the trouble."

"Auntie," Cuthbert said, as his mother hastened from the drawing-room; "would you mind helping me to the window to look at Randal?"

"Won't it be too much for you?"

"No; please let me," said the boy, eagerly, trying to get his crutch from behind the couch; "do let me."

Irene hastened to comply; and, with her arm supporting one side, and his crutch on the other, Cuthbert reached the centre of the three drawing-room windows. It was open; and he said,

"Let me go on the balcony, Auntie; I can't see."

The large window easily allowed both to pass out, and Cuthbert had his desire. Randal had not yet dismounted; and sat with pride upon the graceful pony, stroking the arched neck, and telling his mother he had had the jolliest ride.

"He has a famous seat, too," Sir Philip said; "we

must repeat the ride soon, old fellow. And here comes Jasper, lounging up the Square; pray where have you been?"

"Oh! looking about in Castle Street for a light billiard cue. Rosie wants one."

"I told her I would see to that. Now, then, we must go on; as I have to ride round by the Moor, and we shall not have too much time."

In another minute Randal had jumped off Zoe, and Jasper took his place. Sir Philip put Irene's note into his pocket; and, lifting his hat, bid Mrs. Williamson good-bye.

Leaning over the balcony, Irene and Cuthbert watched the two brothers, unseen, as they believed; but, from one of those curious and sudden impulses which we all of us have felt attract us to look at those, who unobserved are looking at us, Sir Philip glanced up at the house as he rode away. Something inexpressibly pathetic there was in the expression of the lame boy's face—a wistful craving for the energy and activity which he might never know. Something, too, touching and beautiful in the tender support which Irene gave him—her arm around him, his head on a level with her shoulder, against which she pressed her cheek. The likeness between the two faces, which Sir Philip had noticed on the first day he had seen Irene and Cuthbert together, struck him now more forcibly than ever it had done before. He bowed, and smiled; but there was no smile on either of those watching faces. In the eyes of both there was a strange wistful yearning, which Sir Philip could not forget. He looked back as his horse turned out of the Square, and the two figures still remained immovable. He knew not why, but they seemed to be photographed on his mind; and he and Jasper rode silently towards Rockdeane.

A hot tear dropping on the hand which was round Cuthbert, made Irene start from her reverie.

"Come in now, dear."

"Oh, Auntie! Never, never, never to ride like Randal! Never to be strong, and like a boy! Auntie," he added, passionately, "do you know what it is to say *never* about anything?"

"Yes, Cuthbert, I think I do," she said, in a low tone, as she helped him to his couch, laid him tenderly down, and took her place by him. "But, Cuthbert, *never* can only make our hearts ache about this world; there is no sadness in 'never' when we think of the other world. It is a joyful sound there—never to sin, never to suffer, never to feel anything but love."

"Ah, yes," the child sighed; "but *now* is so real and true, and *then* seems so dreamlike and far off."

"I know it, my darling, I know it; but the *then* and the *now* are only parts of God's great whole—all *one* thing. This life is the same life we shall lead in Heaven; only there we shall be free from sin and these mortal bodies, NEVER to be bound again."

Poor little Cuthbert—he is not the only one who has found it hard to lose the pressure and the sadness of *now* in the freedom and the joy of *then*; for our flesh is weak, and will assert itself. The land that is very far off looks faint and dim; we cannot hear the voice of the King, nor discern His beauty. Only through paths of much suffering and much weariness, ever and anon the shadows here *do* present themselves *as* shadows, and the substance stands revealed, as the faithful eye catches a glimpse of the battlements of the City which hath foundations, and knows that there, all sorrow and sighing shall flee away for ever.

Rosie Dennistoun came on Sunday; and, after luncheon, asked Irene if she might go with her to the Almshouse Chapel instead of the Cathedral.

"I should be delighted to go to the Cathedral with you, Miss Dennistoun, and I often take the children there in the afternoon," Mrs. Williamson said: "but——"

"I thought you would stay and read to Cuthbert, Mary," Irene interposed; "I think he expects it."

"Oh! Please do not put out any arrangements for me," Rosie said. "If I may take Randal and Hilda with me to the Almshouse Chapel, I should like it very much. It is the Sunday for afternoon service there, is it not?"

"Yes," Irene answered; "but I am not going to the service. I have several old people to see who cannot get out; and Mrs. Bolton sent me a message this morning that she wanted to speak to me."

"Pray, Irene, do not let that fretful old lady engross you too much. Let her wait till to-morrow. Mrs. Bolton is a veritable Mrs. Gummidge, Miss Dennistoun, and Irene acts the part of the patient Pegotty."

Rosie laughed, but Irene only said: "The children will be very good, I know, if you will take them. It is time we went to dress."

Mrs. Williamson gave the word of command at last; and Randal and Hilda rushed upstairs to get ready.

Mr. Williamson was not at home; and his wife and Rosie were left at the luncheon-table together. This time every necessary preparation had been made for the Sunday guest, and no table could be more tastefully appointed than Mrs. Williamson's.

"Irene is so odd," her sister said, when Irene had left the room. "She has the calmest way of ignoring what I

say. There is not the least necessity for her to go to those old women this afternoon. I really feel scrupulous at the idea of your being troubled with Randal and Hilda."

"Oh, I shall like to have them; they are such nice, bright, little things. Hilda is a perfect beauty."

"I am a good deal tied with my poor lame boy," Mrs. Williamson continued; her eyes sparkling with pleasure at the compliment to her children; "and, as nurse will be out this afternoon, I believe he would be melancholy if I left him."

"Oh! I would not have you leave him for the world on my account. He is a very sweet-looking child. Is he older than Randal?"

"Oh, yes; Randal is scarcely ten, and poor dear Cuthbert is nearly thirteen. He is our eldest child."

By this time Irene and the children returned; and Rosie, saying to Irene, "I hope my bonnet is straight; I felt too idle to go and inspect myself in the glass, and must trust to you," turned to bid Mrs. Williamson good-bye.

"But you will come back to tea, I hope?"

"I think not; thanks. Mamma said she would call for me after the Cathedral service; and, as it is Sunday, we dine earlier, and must get home in good time. I suppose you have made your little preparations, Miss Clifford?"

"Oh, yes; they are not very extensive; and now, please, we must start, or you will be late for the service."

Irene left Randal and Hilda to escort Rosie to the seat they usually occupied in the Chapel, and went her usual rounds amongst the poor people.

Mattie Gillett's cottage had new tenants—a hale, old

man and his wife, who were toddling off to the Chapel as Irene passed the door.

Old Joe had removed into a smaller house, and was now engaged in pulling the rope in the little vestibule, which set a rusty cracked bell in motion at irregular intervals in spasmodic jerks.

Irene found several sick and infirm, to whom she read parts of the service, and then she went to the Warden's house.

There her welcome was always a loving one; but to-day, as the gentle old lady stretched out her arms to her, she burst into tears.

"My dear, my dear child," she faltered; "I had such a trying package from New Zealand yesterday. It is about that I want to tell you. All my poor boy's letters and papers, and some of his clothes—there is not much beside; but oh! Irene, it has been so like the opening of the wound afresh, to see some of the relics of happier days. His partner seems a kind, well disposed man; though, as you know, he suffered much from my poor John's fault. He it was who sent us the first tidings and particulars of his death, and it is in answer to my letter that he has sent off this package. After the expenses of the funeral were paid there was no money left, but I am so thankful to have these things. Get that desk, Irene, please—it is one I gave him; here is the key, and I should like to show you something in it."

Irene expected to see another photograph of Mrs. Bolton's son; and almost dreaded to be obliged again to look at that disagreeable and repulsive face. But when she had put the desk on the small table by Mrs. Bolton's side, and she began to turn over all the papers with her

thin trembling fingers; it was a small pocket-book that she opened.

"Look, dear; this is a sort of irregular diary my poor boy kept during the last year of his life, the year during which we had no tidings of him. You know his father would not answer his last application for money; and he was angry, and wrote to me no more."

A convulsive sob seemed to thrill through the frame of the mother, who mourned for her only child as mothers will mourn—not in proportion to their attractions in the eyes of others; no, nor even in proportion to their goodness, and dutiful behaviour towards themselves, but simply with the mourning of Rachel of old, whose children were not, and whose soul refused comfort.

"I did not show James this diary," Mrs. Bolton continued; "what he says may mean nothing, but I think it is a little curious."

Mrs. Bolton pointed with her finger to a page of the pocket-book, and said, "Read it, dear."

"Recovered to-day fifty pounds of the debt from Mrs. Cleveland, of New Cross farm. I made over some land to her son before his death, and he never paid me. The boy, her grandson, seems to be made of better stuff; and now that he is old enough to judge for himself, has insisted on having some of his father's debts paid. N.B.—There is a rumour in Canterbury, that old Mrs. Cleveland is in reality the wife of an English gentleman, and that she came out here with her son nearly five-and-forty years ago. It is certain she had a handsome allowance paid regularly to her from some source in England."

Then came another entry, a few days later:—

"The boy, who calls himself Jasper Cleveland, has been here with another remittance. He is a puny scrap of a fellow, and lives in the greatest retirement with his old grandmother. I have only seen her once. She looks as if she had a temper; fierce black eyes, that glare at one unpleasantly; but there is something rather superior about the old girl."

Irene paused; wondering much why Mrs. Bolton wished her to read this, and what there was in it which could possibly affect her.

"There is some more on the other side of the page; turn over, Irene."

Irene did so, and she read—

"This last detestable speculation will ruin me, if I don't get some help soon. I have been out to old Mrs. Cleveland, to try and suck a little out of her. I would not face her again; but she let out that her grandson would be somebody grand one day, and said I should be glad to humble myself to him. A queer idea has got into my head, that this boy has something to do with old Sir Jasper Dennistoun, of Rockdeane, for I saw him sign his name, 'Jasper D. Cleveland.' I'll ask my mother if she has any clue to it, next time I write."

Irene stopped, but Mrs. Bolton scarcely noticed it; after all, the mystery about Jasper Cleveland was second in interest to those last words, "next time I write."

"He never wrote again," she murmured. "His father refused the money, and he never wrote again."

Irene did not speak for some time; then she quietly closed the book, and replaced it in the desk.

"I think if I were you, Mrs. Bolton, I should not say anything about this," she said. "After all, it is

mere conjecture; the letter D may stand for another name, and Jasper is not such a very uncommon one. If there is—I mean, if this young man has anything to do with Sir Jasper Dennistoun, one day it will be known."

"Then you think you would not mention this to Sir Philip?"

"Oh, no, no," Irene said eagerly—"nor to Mr. Bolton."

For she knew the little Warden was a sieve; and that the possibility of this boy in Canterbury, New Zealand, having some connexion with the Dennistouns, of Rockdeane, would soon be discussed in Rodham, if he were let into the secret.

"Very well, my dear; it is perhaps better to be silent. I felt as if it would be a relief to tell some one; and, besides, I tell you everything, my kind, dear little sympathiser. Then I thought, as you had known more of the Dennistouns than most people here—and Mr. Williamson is the family lawyer—it would interest you particularly. But I daresay there is nothing in it, and it is better to be silent."

While Mrs. Bolton was speaking, Irene was replacing the desk in the corner from which she had taken it; and it took her some time to arrange the books and papers which had been piled upon it. When, at length, she returned to her seat by Mrs. Bolton's sofa, her face was very grave, almost sad. The old lady laid her hand caressingly in Irene's, and said—

"Read to me now, my dear; and sing some hymns afterwards."

Very soon Irene's sweet voice was reading the Lessons and the Psalms, and then the Collects for the Evening Service.

Mrs. Bolton was always strengthened and refreshed by this little ministry of love, in which Irene never failed week by week; and she had just finished, when the Warden's voice was heard, and he soon bustled into the room, followed by Rosie Dennistoun and the children.

"Here, my dear," he said; "I have brought you a visitor, Miss Dennistoun. She has been to our little service in the chapel, and is very much pleased with it. Can you not order some tea, my dear?"

"Thank you very much," said Rosie; "but we cannot stay very long, for we expect my mother to call for us in Eccleston Square on her way from church. I am going to carry off Irene to Rockdeane for a week."

"A week!" Mrs. Bolton exclaimed. "Then, shall I not see you next Sunday?"

"Oh, yes," Irene said; "and before then. I shall be home again on Wednesday."

"Indeed, you will not," said Rosie. "When I get you at Rockdeane, I shall keep you."

"Well, I have no doubt it will do her good," said Mrs. Bolton; "only there are a great many old folks who scarcely know how to get on without her in Rodham."

"But they must learn to do so, my dear," said the little Warden, who had gone to the cheffoniere and taken out a tin of biscuits, which he offered to Randal and Hilda; "they must learn. Now, little people, help yourselves. Well, if you are in haste, I will walk with you young ladies as far as Eccleston Square. I like a breath of air and a little exercise after service; and I have promised to read prayers for my friend Jackson, this evening."

After a little more talk with Mrs. Bolton, Rosie said good-bye, and the whole party left the room together.

Mrs. Bolton lay down on her pillow exhausted, for any unwonted stir and bustle was too much for her. She closed her eyes; and her thoughts went back into the past. Her son's letters and papers seemed to have opened many memories which had apparently been shut for ever. She went over the days when her husband was first Warden of the Almshouses and Vicar of St. Magdalene, and of their coming to Rodham, when her boy was young, and went to and fro to the Grammar School every day, with his book-satchel over his shoulder, and his face bright and unclouded by sin. Over the many changes of these six and twenty years her thoughts travelled, and the number of old pensioners whom she had seen pass away, and carried out under the archway to their last resting-place in St. Magdalene's Churchyard. The oldest had been the last. Mattie Gillett had died in September, and, through the long winter which had succeeded, no one else had followed her. Several now lay feebly breathing out their lives, and would never "get up May Hill," the Nurse of the Almshouses said; but Mattie's had been the last funeral, a few days after Sir Jasper Dennistoun's.

With thoughts of old Mattie Gillett came a curious feeling, that the name which her son had mentioned in his Diary was connected with her; that she had seen it somewhere, or heard of it, as in some way associated with her—how, she could not recal. That some story, vague and indistinct, floated amongst the old people about Joe Gillett's wife she knew; but, imprisoned to her couch for

so many years, she had seen very little of them, and had not, in her more active days, been in the habit of visiting the various cottages often.

Till she had known Irene, Mrs. Bolton had led that self-contained life which is too common with invalids, and her sympathies and interests had centred very much in her own anxieties and troubles. Now, if she had had the bodily power, she would have used it for others, she thought; and, as it was, the old people amongst whom she lived became more individual to her, and many little comforts, which before had not been thought of, were now dispensed from the Warden's house by Irene's hand.

Sunday evening passed quickly at Rockdeane, and Rosie resigned herself to a dreamy repose with a book in a comfortable chair. Jasper went out into the grounds; and Irene, seated in one of the deep mullioned windows, looked out upon the view before her.

Sir Philip had opened a pretty peep of the Cathedral between the trees, and both it and the old Castle could now be seen from the front of the house.

Mrs. Dennistoun kept up a little conversation with Sir Philip about their visit to Bishop's Court, but that too soon ceased; and then there were no sounds but the evensong of the birds, and the soft murmur of the stream, as they were borne in through the open windows on the wings of the soft May breeze, which scarcely moved the branches of the trees as it whispered through them. A Sunday-like repose seemed to brood over all things; and Irene had almost forgotten where she was, when Sir Philip's voice, close to her, startled her.

"Would you like to go round the house?" he asked. "I have collected all the old pictures in the gallery which connects the two wings. There is not much to see,

perhaps; but I have found a little Chapel, which had fallen into disuse, and I have had a small harmonium put there for the present, till I can get an organ fitted into the proper place. Will you come and try it?"

Irene rose to comply; and, as they passed through the drawing-room, the sound of their footsteps was scarcely heard on the soft pile carpets. Sir Philip smiled as he passed Rosie's chair. The book had fallen from her hand, and she was fast asleep; her mother was writing at a little table, and was so engrossed that she did not look up. Sir Philip led the way across the hall to a low, pointed door in a remote corner, which he opened by turning one of those heavy iron handles which require a strong hand to lift.

Although Sir Philip was not very tall, being scarcely above the average height, he was obliged to bend his head a little as he passed into the small dark passage, at the end of which was another door very like the first, and leading into the small, perpendicular chapel, which, until now, had been unused for years.

"Evidently," he said, "this was the domestic Chapel in old days. When I came here it was filled with rubbish, and that window blocked up. I have had it scraped and cleaned; and here you see is the credence table, out of which we cleared a nest of robins last winter. I have had these chairs put in, and in time I shall replace the Communion table; the three steps here indicate plainly where it stood. One day, when I can find courage, I mean to have morning and evening prayer here; but it is rather difficult to begin a new order of things."

"It is the old order, is it not?" said Irene, in her low sweet voice.

"Yes," he said; "perhaps you are right. Our friends Dame Editha and Sir Philip, I have no doubt, said their daily prayers here."

"I am sure they did," Irene said, earnestly, "and when those tidings came from Edge-hill, I can fancy that she came here in her trouble."

"Will you try the harmonium," he said, opening it; "and sing something? Here are some books;" and he put up upon the desk some sacred music and hymns.

Irene had just struck a few chords, when Rosie came through the little narrow door, smiling, and saying,

"I thought I should find you here. Mamma is coming too, she wants to hear Irene sing. Philip says you sing beautifully," she added.

"Let us all sing together," Irene said; "that is so much pleasanter with hymns."

"Oh! Philip says I get out of tune; and he has a very fastidious ear, though I can't say his own voice is like a Sims Reeves'."

"You pert child," said Philip; "how disrespectful you are to your elders and superiors."

Irene was turning over the leaves of the hymn-book; and could not join in the light talk in the chapel, which to her was full of memories of the past, and of the many prayers and praises which had ascended from there in the days of long ago.

"Come, do begin," Rosie said; and very soon Irene's melodious voice was ringing through the little chapel, in full, rich cadence.

Hymn after hymn she sang; and Mrs. Dennistoun sat spell-bound, while those servants who were at home gathered in the hall to listen; and even Jasper came with the rest. At last, when "Abide with me; fast falls the

eventide," had been sung, with unwonted sweetness and earnestness, Irene rose.

"I have gone on too long, I am afraid," she said; "but I am so accustomed to sing every evening to Cuthbert, that I forgot how long I had kept you."

"It is quite charming," Mrs. Dennistoun began, in tones that jarred on Sir Philip's ear. "I suppose you sing a great deal in Rodham society, Miss Clifford?"

"No! indeed I do not; I go very little into Rodham society," Irene answered; and Sir Philip's shrug of the shoulders was not lost upon her. He held the door for them as they went out of the chapel; and, as Irene passed him, he said,

"Thank you!" in a way that brought the colour to her face. "That is how you sing to Cuthbert, I know; and not to Rodham society."

She understood him at once; but she answered quietly, "I tried to think of the words I sang, and of Him to whom I sang them, just now. Somehow, they were very full of meaning in that chapel."

Again Mrs. Dennistoun broke in:—"Come, Miss Clifford, it will be too dark to go through the gallery;" and, as she paused for Irene to come up with her, she began to descant on the improvements and alterations she had suggested or had already carried out.

The ancestors of the Dennistouns were very much like the ancestors of other families, for there is a wonderful similarity in the appearance of people of the same date in history. There were portraits of ladies in their ruffs and hoops, their stiff head-dresses and coloured top-knots —of gentlemen in their elaborate coats, with ruffles at the wrists, and deep lace collars, plumed hats, and flowing locks—all marking the age of the Cavaliers.

Evidently, there had been no Puritans amongst the Dennistouns.

"This is Sir Philip, who fell at Edge-hill," Mrs. Dennistoun said. "There are several portraits of him—one in Philip's room, which you shall see one day. There is an inscription on that picture which tells his story. It is a fine face. Lady Eugenia Le Marchant thinks it so very like the present Philip."

"Is Lady Editha here?" Irene asked.

"Oh, yes! a plain little woman—quite unlike what you would have expected Sir Philip's wife to be. She hangs next him, that is she!"

"She looks very young," Irene said; "almost a child; and she is not dressed like the other ladies."

"No; she had Puritan blood in her veins. Had she not, Philip?"

"Yes; her father was an officer in the rebel army," said Philip; "a country gentleman in these parts. His name was Buckland. Editha, however, if somewhat of a Puritan in her dress, was a Royalist at heart, or she would scarcely have married Sir Philip. I like her," he continued; "I do something more—I admire her. The more you look into that face, the more it responds to you."

Lady Editha was represented in this portrait as very young; and, at first sight, amidst the languishing beauties surrounding her, you might have called her plain. But Sir Philip was right when he said that the longer you looked at her the more her face seemed to answer to your gaze. There were no falling curls on a white, rounded shoulder, no low bodice, and no built-up erection of powdered coiffure above the square, wide brow. The brown hair was gathered back, and just shaded the outline of the neck, as the head was turned slightly on one

side. The features were regular, and the mouth especially grave and sweet in expression; the eyes were wistful and tender, with a far-away look in them, which seemed to be almost conscious of coming trouble. The dress was cut square, with a white muslin kerchief filling it in, and the sleeves were short to the elbow, with plaited ruffles hanging from them. The colour of the dress was pale dove; and the only relief was a rose which she wore at her girdle, and on which the artist had evidently expended much care; and the petals were yet crimson, for time had scarcely dimmed their brightness. Lady Editha's small hands were folded upon her lap, and the whole attitude was at once one of patience and repose.

"I really think," said Rosie, "that Dame Editha is like you, Irene—only it is not paying you a compliment. Look, this portrait next to her is her son, Sir Jasper, and that hard-looking woman is his wife. But it is getting too dark to see the pictures well. Let us wait till to-morrow to go over the house. I hate it in the dark and twilight; it is always so 'ghosty,' as Mrs. Smith says. She is the bailiff's wife. I must take you to pay her a visit, Irene; she is worth seeing."

"I did see her one day last autumn," Irene thought; but, as Sir Philip was near them, it seemed impossible for her to say so. Rosie soon found another subject to talk about, and Mrs. Smith was forgotten.

When they returned to the drawing-room the tea had been brought in; and the rest of the evening was a good deal occupied with a discussion between Jasper and his mother about an expedition he wanted to make the next day with Frederick Tillett, to fish on Derwentwater. At last Philip was appealed to, and gave his opinion

in the negative—chiefly on the ground that Frederick Tillett was not a good companion for Jasper, and that he did not wish him to be too intimate with him. Mrs. Dennistoun's reasons for objecting were different: she descanted on the dangers of boating; the terror she should be in all day that something would happen; the fear of rain; of Jasper's catching cold; and many other alarms of the same kind. Then she proposed, if he went, that a servant should go with him; at which Jasper rebelled, saying, "he was not a baby or a milksop;" and a great deal of unseemly wrangling followed between mother and son, which Philip bore in silence, till at last the powers of endurance seemed gone, and Jasper was ordered sternly to bed. After his departure a constrained silence fell upon the rest of the party, which Rosie finding she could not dispel, proposed to Irene that they should say "Good night," and follow Jasper's example.

When the two girls were alone together, Rosie settled herself in an easy chair, in Irene's room, and said they could have a nice talk. Irene was content to listen as Rosie went over all her little experiences for her benefit. Hers was a fresh, bright enjoyment in her new life, which it was pleasant to see. It was simply the pleasure of a girl, and had nothing in it of pretension or foolish elation. Philip was her hero; and Irene smiled at her description of him as the elder brother and mainstay of them all.

"He snubs me sometimes," she said; "but I can take it from him; he is so really great that I can understand how littlenesses and weaknesses irritate him. I am only afraid that Jasper, as he grows older, will be the great trial to us all. Mamma cannot contradict him; and if she attempts to do so there is a scene such as you

saw this evening. He will fight for his own way, and argue the point; and he is so weak, and so easily led. If it were not for Philip I cannot think what he would be. Perhaps Eton will do him good; but it all depends on the boys he associates with. That ill-bred boy, Frederick Tillett, can make him do anything. All that horrid rudeness to your little nephew the other day was his fault. Those are the kind of things which make Philip so angry. We were at Bishop's Court yesterday," Rosie went on, after a pause. "You saw Lady Eugenia Le Marchant here the other day; what did you think of her?"

"I thought her pretty, and graceful; but rather too languid in her manner."

"Yes; that all goes off when she is interested in anything. She gets so animated, and different. She was talking to Philip about his standing for this division of the county, yesterday; and she got quite excited; and seemed so anxious he should try, and be successful. It is not, somehow, like Philip to be attracted by Lady Eugenia. But there is nothing but inconsistency in people, and Philip is like the rest of the world. The provoking part of it is that mamma evidently wishes it to comes to pass, and makes it too obvious."

What the "it" was Irene did not inquire. Rosie chatted on for some time longer, and then left her to herself. It was a relief to be alone; a relief to go to the window, and see the star-lit sky and the great masses of the trees, and to hear the little river hurrying over the rocks below. Irene knelt by the open casement for a long time, just as she had knelt hundreds of times in her own little room at Orchard Leigh, in Devonshire, round

which the roses clustered, and beneath which the great sea, towards which the little babbling brook now sounding in her ear was rushing, lay vast and calm and beautiful. Life then and now, how different it was! Her girlish dreams had been dreamed, and she had seen many crumble into dust. But the inner peace was the same now as then. Changes and decay could not touch it. What though the one great tie which bound her to life with so strong and firm a hold, was severed? What though her mother, who had shared every care and every joy for so many years, was gone? What though she missed her thoughtful, though never demonstrative love in little as in great things; the one unfailing source of joy remained, sometimes less realized, sometimes more, but still it was always there. In all her trials and in all her failures, there would come to her soul the remembrance—that He to whom she had given herself was the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!

It was possible to live with Irene for many days and many weeks, and from her lips would never, perhaps, fall words which conveyed what I have written here; but nevertheless few could be with her for an hour, without acknowledging there was something in her, which lifted her above the cares and tumults of this busy, troublesome world, and made an atmosphere about her which beautified her whole life. As I write this, I would not let anyone think that I wish to represent Irene as free from faults, or from the weaknesses which all women share in common. Just at this moment in her history, when her face is turned up to the sky, from whence the stars are looking down on her with eyes of love, she is confessing that she has been weak; and that now, with the weight of twenty-four years upon her head, she has

been dreaming a dream, for which, at sixteen, she would not have found an excuse. And she did not spare herself; but when she lay down to rest, it was in perfect peace, though it might be in the valley of humiliation, and not on the mountain-top of triumph and victory.

CHAPTER VII.

AN OLD FRIEND APPEARS.

"Oh, world unknown, how charming is thy view!
Thy pleasures many, and each pleasure new!
Ah, world experienced, what of thee is told!
How few thy pleasures, and those few how old."

CRABBE.

ROSIE and Irene were out early the next morning, for what Rosie called "a real scrambling walk."

"We will go over the moor, and come round by the hamlet, and see the curiosities of the neighbourhood, and end with Mrs. Smith, who I hope will give us elder-flower wine and ginger-cakes."

Rosie was making this plan, when Jasper trotted out on his pony, past the two girls.

"Where are you going, Jasper?" Rosie called, as he took the way down the avenue, while they were turning up towards the moor; "Jasper, where are you going?"

"Just in the opposite direction to you, Miss Rosie; so make your mind easy." And the boy put the pony into a quick canter, and was soon out of sight.

"I hope he is not going to find Frederick Tillett, and start for Derwentwater," Rosie said, looking back at the hastily retreating figure.

"He surely would not be so disobedient," Irene said, "after what passed with his mother last evening?"

"I would not trust him," was Rosie's answer; "there is never any dependence to be placed on Jasper. We can get through the plantations up here," she continued; "have you ever been this way before?"

"Yes, several times; it is a long walk from Rodham, but I have accomplished it once or twice."

"Such a lovely air is always blowing here," Rosie said; as they came out upon the open country. "We will make for that stone on the little knoll, and there we will sit down. I have got my sketch-book in my pocket, and I may be moved to draw."

When they reached the spot Rosie indicated, a black object, just under the shadow of the rough stone, made Rosie exclaim, "Some one is here before us; who can it be? How tiresome; we shall not be able to sit down there; and that big stone just keeps off the sun pleasantly."

As she spoke, the black object moved, and Sir Philip drew himself up from the soft heather and moss, and looked towards them.

"It is Philip; but some one is with him—who can it be? I can't imagine; for no one was in the house this morning at breakfast."

Her curiosity was soon gratified; for, at the sound of Sir Philip's "Halloo," another figure started to his feet, and advancing towards them with his hat in his hand, greeted Rosie with a sort of shy pleasure, to which she responded.

"An old friend has turned up, at last, Rosie; he always does turn up at the most unexpected places. Mr. Sand-

ford, Miss Clifford," Sir Philip said; "a fellow-pedestrian of mine in Switzerland and Savoy."

"Yes," Mr. Sandford said, turning his knapsack across his shoulder, and replacing his big straw hat upon his thick curling hair, "Philip is always to be found on the highest ground—an old weakness of his, Miss Dennistoun, to get as near the sky as he can."

"I don't know that I have ever tried a balloon yet," Philip remonstrated, as they all seated themselves on the heather.

"Yes," continued Mr. Sandford; "I was directed to this stone as the highest point in the neighbourhood by a broad Cumberland farmer, and told that I should get the finest view of Rodham and out beyond of the mountains, and a strip of channel to the north; not to mention Rockdeane below me, and the Scar a quarter of a mile to the right. I have proved it all true; and added to it a view of Sir Philip, lying at his full length on this soft cushion, and just as little surprised to see me as if we had met yesterday."

"My dear fellow, you always do crop up in every conceivable place; why not here as well as anywhere else? So like you never to give me a line, when I have sent you three invitations to Rockdeane in due form, to which you have never replied."

"I feel shy, you see; and it always takes off the edge of enjoyment when one thinks too much of it beforehand. Besides, you are such a great man now; and how could I tell if you really meant what you said?"

"Humph!" said Philip; "I really mean what I say now; which is, that you are to stay here now you are come."

"Well; I daresay I shall make no objection. To tell the truth, I have left more garments under the shadow of

the Mitre, at Rodham, than I have in this little bag. I left them there on Friday; and then took a walk towards Heathtown, where I slept last night, and got round here again to-day—a pretty little stretch of thirty miles over a fine country. I think I will pursue my way to Rodham now; and, having found my worldly possessions, will look you up at luncheon."

"Very well; but we may as well make a détour by the edge of the Scar, which we can cross at the upper end, and get into the hamlet of Rockdeane; that is what you were going to do, were you not, Rosie?"

"Yes; I am going round by Mrs. Smith's, that Irene may see her; and I want her to see the house also from the opposite side of the stream. But let us rest here a little while; it is so nice."

Every one seemed of Rosie's mind; and only a little fragmentary talk passed between the four as they sat in the full enjoyment of the summer day. The wild bees flew past; and, while butterflies danced in airy couples above the thyme and heather, Rosie's pencil made a few lines on the blank page of her sketch-book; but she felt dreamy and indisposed for much exertion. George Sandford watched her from under the wide brim of his hat, and it was not difficult to interpret the expression of his face; while Irene twisted heath and grass into all kinds of fantastic shapes, and Philip lay almost full-length a little apart from the others—not asleep, as Rosie said, but lost in thought.

A spell seemed to lie upon the whole party, which none wished to be the first to break. At last, Philip roused himself, and said:—

"If you and I are to get to Rodham before luncheon, Sandford, we must push on now."

He stood up as he spoke, and began to take long strides over the low grass and heather. George Sandford lingered; evidently he wished Irene to be the next to follow; but it was Rosie, who, with a few springs, reached her brother's side, and Irene was left with George Sandford. Philip walked on, and the others were some way behind.

"Have you known them long?" Irene's companion asked, at last.

"You mean Sir Philip and his sister?" Irene said quickly.

"Yes; of course, I do," was the answer.

"No; I have only known the Dennistouns since last autumn; my brother-in-law," she added, "is Sir Philip's lawyer."

"I have known him for years," was the rejoinder; "I saw him last on the Lake of Geneva, and was the first to tell him of old Sir Jasper's death. I intended, as much as I ever intend anything, to come here sooner; but somehow, I went on to Italy for the winter, and since then I have been wasting my time in Corsica. I am a bird of passage you see."

"Have you no settled home?" Irene asked.

"Well, yes; the home is settled, only I never am. I have the misfortune to be the heir to a little place and a few acres in Somersetshire. I am an only son, another misfortune; and I have never had any need to earn my bread."

"Misfortune the third," said Irene, laughing.

"Yes; I believe you," was the answer. "The greatest of all. I saw a great deal of Philip at one time, as he got my old father well out of some ridiculous action as to a right of way. He is a fine fellow; always first somehow,

always doing something well, and never a bit set up by it. Now here he is lord of all this,"—giving his hand a rapid swing through the air—"and I don't believe it, or anything else, will spoil him. The only thing is, he is always looking for something above him—some point he wants to reach; and now, bless me, there seems nothing left for him to attain—he has got all. I like a little local gossip, and mine host at the inn at Heathtown regaled me with some last night. He said the new Baronet was very popular, and he was going to stand for the county, and marry some one with a name a yard long—Lady Theodoria, or Euphemia Le Marchant, who had a fortune to add to Sir Philip's."

Irene could not help being amused with her companion, whom she discovered, at once, to be one of those people, who, on a broad foundation of common sense, play off a variety of eccentricities for the edification of their neighbours.

"Mine host of the Red Lion, Heathtown, also told me some stories of the country side, about old Sir Jasper; how, in his youth" he checked himself suddenly; "but I daresay it is not worth repeating these fictions. I wish Philip would not stalk on ahead in that fashion, and take his sister in his wake; and where is he gone now?"

For Sir Philip's and Rosie's figures were lost in the gorse and brake, as they took a path seldom trod, which wound down to a foot-bridge at the bottom of the ravine, where, crossing the river, another path led up the opposite bank.

Irene brushed away the brake, which was almost as tall as she was, and she and Mr. Sandford followed in the track of Sir Philip and Rosie. At last, at the little

bridge, there was a halt made by those in advance, and then Sir Philip and George Sandford exchanged places. The great gleam of satisfaction which struck across George Sandford's face, was evidently amusing to Sir Philip.

"Poor fellow!" he ejaculated; "I am afraid it is like the moth singing its wings at the candle;" and then he and Irene pursued their way, gradually falling into conversation, which was scarcely less restrained than in days past. After half-an-hour's walking on the edge of the bank, they came to a little opening in the coppice, which Irene at once recognised as the place where Randal had disappeared in search of the blackberries on that September day. Sir Philip came to a pause; and turning full upon her, said:—

"It is just below here that you and Randal hung suspended in mid-air last autumn. I have never forgotten your presence of mind and calmness then."

Irene did not answer; and then presently said, in an indifferent tone, "I hope I may never need presence of mind more than I did then; after all, it was nothing, only to keep still."

"But if help had not come, you could not have held out much longer," Philip was about to say; and then stopped himself. If Irene did not wish to remember that that help was his—he would not be the one to remind her of it. That any one so gentle and quiet in manner should have such powers of resistance in her, surprised him. He always felt now, that he could come to a certain point with her, and no farther. Anything personal was at once put aside—while on all topics of general interest, she could talk as easily as ever. With Lady Eugenia, he told himself, it was different. She led

the conversation almost always to matters which concerned him or herself.

He had not known her long; but he was in full possession of what she considered the trials of her life—her weak health, and the little sympathy which she experienced from her uncle and aunt, whom she was pleased to look upon as very common-place and prosaic individuals, who could not understand the aspirations of a woman like herself. Then she had a subtle way of extracting like confidences from him; and to schemes and plans for the future, which pointed to any increase of influence and position, she listened with deep interest.

There were moments when Lady Eugenia's careless, irreverent allusion to things which he held sacred would jar upon Sir Philip's feelings, and there were moments when he showed this, and she would carefully avoid any repetition for the time. But, however guarded we may be, the real self will peep out at unsuspected corners, and cannot always be hid.

Eugenia Le Marchant was, I fear, a woman of which there are an increasing number in these nineteenth century days. She could descant on any popular subject, and give her opinion upon it; and she believed herself in earnest about the improvement of her own intellectual calibre, and that of other women also. But it was the building up of a fabric without a foundation. At any moment, under the pressure of trial or sorrow, of sickness, or of death, the whole might fall, and the ruin of the house be great.

The gifts and graces of an intellectual and refined woman are, beyond all doubt, of great value; but, if she would use them for the good of her day and generation, there must be something deeper still, which no mere

mental cultivation can reach. There must be the surrender of self to Him, whose love is the only worthy object of an immortal soul—the only thing which can satisfy its longings, and teach it its really high vocation—a vocation which saintly women of old times, aye, and of modern times, too, have followed; and, whether with or without 'all knowledge and all tongues,' have found blessed for this world, and how much more for the next!

At the door of Mr. Smith's house, Sir Philip and Mr. Sandford left the two girls, and pursued their way to Rodham at the rapid, even pace with which great walkers always get over the ground.

Mrs. Smith kept her visitors waiting, as usual, in the little parlour, which looked precisely as it had done months before, while she changed her cap and gown.

"Smith was neither better nor worse," she said, in answer to Rosie's inquiries; "he was rasped and put out by Sir Philip getting an under-bailiff; but, lor, it was quite natural. It was not as if he had taken off any of Smith's salary; he was much too open-handed for that. But there," said the good woman, "his tantrums are dreadful, poor soul. It's pain that does it, and he is that helpless now, he is like an infant; but one never knows what a man may bring himself or his wife to—you young ladies, remember that."

The redundant roses in Mrs. Smith's best cap nodded over the elder-flower wine as she spoke, which, as Rosie had prophesied, made its appearance, together with the thin ginger cakes, which were scarcely tangible in the mouth—wafers, in fact, which Huntley and Palmer could hardly rival.

To Rosie's surprise, Mrs. Smith addressed Irene as an old acquaintance, and inquired after Randal, and then

laughed long and loud at the mistake she had made in addressing her as Sir Philip's wife.

"Lor, how confused they both looked," she said to Rosie; "and I never to know the new Baronet. But I know him now, well enough; and I can tell you, Miss Clifford, it will be a lucky woman whoever is my lady at last. Perhaps she may never come, though I did hear the other day she was to be the lady belonging to the Bishop's family; but I can't mind her name—it was such a long one. You know who I mean."

"Lady Eugenia Le Marchant," Rosie said; "I suppose you are thinking of her; but, indeed, Mrs. Smith, I am by no means sure that my brother has thought of her in the way you mean."

At this moment a loud thumping overhead, repeated, and, indeed, almost continuous, was heard.

"That's Smith at it. You know, Miss Dennistoun, how he goes on. He is sitting up to-day in his arm-chair. A pretty fuss we have had to get him there; and now, I dare say, he wants to go back to bed. Just excuse me a minute, young ladies;" and the good woman departed to her *exigeant* lord and master.

"Isn't she fun?" Rosie asked, as Mrs. Smith left the room; "but how was it she had seen you before, Irene? You never told me; and what was the joke about you and Philip? Did he bring you here?"

The colour came to Irene's face, and she said: "Randal and I were walking along the bank of the river one day last autumn, and he lost his balance in reaching over a bit of rock to gather some blackberries. I caught his arm, and held him up. Sir Philip saw us from the Terrace at Rockdeane, and came to our rescue. Afterwards, Randal, who had sprained his arm, was glad to lie

down in this room; while Sir Philip got a carriage—a gig, I suppose I ought to call it—to take us home. That is all."

"How strange that you never told me about it before, Irene; but I remember Philip once said you had the greatest amount of self-possession and presence of mind he ever saw. That was in the days when he used to tell me so much about you. Now he never——" Rosie stopped.

"There is no need to tell you about me now, is there?" Irene answered, gently. "You know me for yourself."

"I don't think I do," Rosie said; "I would know you and love you so much, if you would let me."

"You are always so kind," said Irene; "and you must not think I don't feel it, for I do. It is not my way to say much; but you may depend upon me, dear, as a friend, if you ever need one."

The tone was caressing and tender; and little Rosie, in her quick, impulsive way, threw her arms round Irene, and kissed her, saying,

"I like you to love me—you are so good." And then she went on, almost in the same breath, "Do you like Philip's friend, Mr. Sandford?"

"Yes; I think he is very original and amusing; but he seems very erratic in his tendencies."

"So different to old Philip; and yet they are great allies. Mamma does not like him; and I know we shall have a little snubbing scene to-day, when he appears at luncheon, after the manner of the Tilletts, and such folk."

"Those unlucky Tilletts," said Irene, laughing. "I hear them quoted on all hands."

At this moment Mrs. Smith returned.

"Did you ever hear such nonsense?" she said. "If that trying man doesn't want to see you young ladies; but, as I tell him, he isn't fit to be seen; and ——"

"Oh, no!" said Rosie, with an almost perceptible shudder; "I am sure we had better not go upstairs, thank you. Indeed, I think we must go home now, Irene, or we shall be late for luncheon."

"Well, there," said Mrs. Smith, instantly, after the fashion of wives, wishing to gratify her husband, when another seemed to contradict him, "he has a dullish time of it, no doubt; and I have got the room tidy, and he is in his best flowered dressing-gown, and ——"

But Rosie was resolute; and her beseeching look at Irene was so amusing, that she restrained the inclination she felt to go and see the poor old man, and try to cheer and soften him; and, bidding Mrs. Smith good-bye, left the house with Rosie.

"You don't mean to say you could have gone up to see that horrid old man?" Rosie asked, as they walked away.

"Why not?" said Irene. "If I were in old Mr. Smith's place, I dare say I should be glad of the variety of a new face; and, besides, there is no telling what a little kindness and sympathy might do for him."

"I knew you were longing to go and talk 'goody' to him," said Rosie, "just as you do to the old Almshouse people; but you should hear what Philip says of Mr. Smith. He says it is a perfect penance to go near him. He does nothing but abuse his wife; and, one day, when Philip was there, he threw a book at her—for he has the use of one arm, though not of his legs."

Irene looked grave; and Rosie said, quickly, "You didn't like my saying, 'talk goody,' did you?"

"You seem to interpret my face so well that I need not answer," was the reply. "You have guessed what I felt twice this morning."

"Don't be vexed with me," Rosie said, in her child-like way. "I know perfectly well that I am not half as good as you are. And, oh, dear! I rather dread what is coming. Mamma is sure to be disagreeable about Mr. Sandford. I should not wonder if she pretends she has forgotten who he is!"

Irene's voice was very grave now, as she said, "Do not speak in that way of your mother, Rosie!"

"Oh! I don't mean anything, you know. Mamma and I understand each other; and I am always proud of her. As mistress of Rockdeane she is perfect, except when she turns the cold shoulder on people, as she will to-day you will see. Well; I don't think he will take it to heart."

Luncheon was more than half over when the dining-room door opened, and Sir Philip came in.

"Here is my friend Sandford," he said, introducing the tall, awkward figure, in the rough grey suit, advancing with his enormous straw hat in his hand to greet Mrs. Dennistoun. "I have picked him up on the Moor, and we have been down into Rodham to rescue his luggage from the Mitre; and we have come up the hill in a cab, from the same venerable and time-honoured establishment, worthy its name, which is suggestive of all the uneasy heads that ever wore an episcopal crown."

"Rosie," said Mrs. Dennistoun, stiffly, "do you remember Mr. Sandford? Miss Clifford—Mr. Sandford."

The colour came into Rosie's face, as she said, "I have seen Mr. Sandford before this morning, mamma—we met him on the Moor."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Dennistoun, drily. "How very late Jasper is," she went on; "he must have gone for a very long ride. You know nothing of him, I suppose, Philip?"

"I am afraid I do," said Philip. "Mr. Tillett told me that Jasper and his son were gone for a day's fishing."

"Oh, Philip!" said Mrs. Dennistoun, "how dreadfully anxious I shall be."

"And I shall be something more than anxious," said Philip. "He must know that such an act of disobedience shall not be repeated. Now, Rosie," he went on, changing his tone, "what do you say to an expedition to Derwentwater to-morrow? A quiet family pic-nic, you know."

"I think it will be delightful," said Rosie. "I have never had a proper day on Derwentwater yet."

All this time Mr. Sandford had been doing justice to the varied viands before him. He was apparently quite indifferent to Mrs. Dennistoun's cold reception, and kept up a conversation with Rosie, which was evidently interesting to both.

"We will start early," Philip said, "and take our luncheon with us. We can dine when we return, at seven or eight, as the case may be. I must consult the railway book."

"Is not the weather too hot, Philip?" Mrs. Dennistoun interposed. "I should be afraid of Rosie and Jasper exerting themselves too much in the heat."

"I think Rosie will not succumb," said Philip quietly. "Jasper will not have the chance; as he has gone to-day in direct opposition to your wishes and mine, he must stay at home to-morrow."

Philip's determined manner admitted of no remonstrance; and Mrs. Dennistoun rose, and left the room, with Rosie and Irene.

"Well," George Sandford said, when Philip and he were alone together; "I have entered into temptation, and it is no use trying to resist it. You know what I mean."

"Perhaps I do," said Philip; "but don't take holy words in vain, there's a good fellow."

"Pshaw!" said his friend; "I wish you would not come down upon me like that. But seriously, Philip; unless you wish to make an end of me altogether, you must say—go, or stay. I can't be near her without making a fool of myself. I can't talk fine talk about it; but this I know, if you will let me try and win your sister, you shall never repent it."

"No," said Philip, "I don't think I should; but her mother must be consulted—and how about Rosie herself?"

"Ah! that is the hitch; I am not sure, but I suppose I hope. I am getting tired of my wandering-jew sort of life, and I think I could do very well now in the old place at home. With her, I could live in peace at Stow, and turn into the worthy, easy-going country squire. Of course I should want a fling once a-year; and she—but it is great rubbish talking like this, as if I were sure. Only, Philip, if you let me stay here, you must take the consequences."

"Very well," said Sir Philip; "ours has been a long friendship, Sandford, and you know me pretty well by this time; I could wish nothing better for Rosie than what you offer her. One thing let me say; your want of reverence sometimes jars upon me. Any chaff or banter

you please; only, not about the unseen and the sacred. Give me your hand, old fellow."

George Sandford locked Philip's fingers in such a vice, that he could scarcely help crying out for mercy; and so the compact was sealed.

"How long does your friend propose staying here?" asked Mrs. Dennistoun, the next day, in a pause, before the whole party started for Derwentwater, while the girls were dressing, and the hampers were being stowed away by the footmen on the box of the waggonette. Mrs. Dennistoun was ready herself; and this question was put to her stepson in a moment of irritation; for he had refused to condone Jasper's offence of yesterday, by allowing him to join the party to-day.

"He will be utterly ruined," Sir Philip had said, "if he is allowed to go on in this wilful fashion; if it is bad at thirteen, what will it a few years hence?"

Thus there was in Mrs. Dennistoun's voice a tone of querulous dissatisfaction, as she went on—"Of course, Philip, all your friends are welcomed by me at Rockdeane. There can be no doubt that it is my duty to welcome them; but I don't feel quite satisfied about this Mr. Sandford. I really fear he has some absurd idea of proposing to Rosie. He may be all that is clever and original, and you may like him as a travelling companion, and so on; but, of course, Rosie must now look a great deal higher than—of course, such a thing is out of the question."

There was an amused twinkle in Philip's eye, which did not escape Mrs. Dennistoun; and she went on more sharply—"If you are in Mr. Sandford's confidence, Philip, I think you ought at once to tell him that I cannot con-

sent to—that any idea of an engagement between him and Rosie could not possibly meet my approval. Philip, do you hear?"

Philip had been turning over the pages of the "Pall Mall" in his usually quiet fashion, while Mrs. Dennistoun was speaking. He put it down now; and said, with a smile lurking in the corners of his mouth, "I think Sandford had better plead his own cause with you; he is as honest a fellow as ever breathed; and I have the highest opinion of his principles. I know what his feelings are for Rosie; but I am in ignorance about hers for him. She would fall into very good hands, if she fell into Sandford's; and you know, as far as worldly matters go, he is in a very good position. His father and mother are old people; he is the only son; and there is an income of 1,500*l.* a-year, which goes with Stow."

"£1,500 a-year!" said Mrs. Dennistoun, with a contemptuous ring in her voice; "and Stow is merely one of those old farmhouses, with gable roofs and wide staircases, which pass for gentlemen's houses in Somersetshire. Besides, the old man actually does farm, does he not?"

"I daresay: but he sent his son to the University, and, if he had been so disposed, he might have made his way in any profession. And really a year ago, you and I, and Jasper and Rosie, would have thought half 1,500*l.* a-year riches for us all."

"You are so fond of going over the past; you forget that you were always the heir of Rockdeane. However, I heartily wish I had not consented to this expedition; poor Jasper, condemned to solitary imprisonment, too!"

"Come, mamma, come, Philip, we are all ready," said

Rosie; "we shall be late for the train—we shall, indeed. What are you talking about?"

"Don't be so impatient, Rosalie" (her name in full was ominous); "get into the carriage. I have a word to say to Mrs. Mason."

"Mamma," exclaimed Rosie, in an agony, "you will make us late; pray, come."

But Mrs. Dennistoun did not hurry; and rang the bell of the morning-room, where the conversation with Philip had taken place, and summoned Mrs. Mason to a consultation.

"Come, Rosie," said Philip, pitying his sister's distress; "we will go and settle ourselves. It is a comfort the waggonette will hold us all. Now, then;" and he handed Irene and Rosie to *vis-à-vis* places, then waited for Mrs. Dennistoun with George Sandford.

At last she appeared, and they were fairly off, and just in time for the train. And then very soon they had left the old city of Rodham far behind, and were amidst the mountains, with Derwentwater stretched out like a vast blue mirror before them.

Sir Philip hired a boat; and he and George Sandford rowed about the lake and landed on Lord's Island, where the baskets were unpacked by the servants and Sir Philip, and the cold repast eaten, which did credit to Mrs. Mason's skill.

The day passed, as such days do pass; to two, at least, of the party it was always marked with a red letter in their calendar. Irene, perhaps, found her task the most difficult, for Mrs. Dennistoun was inaccessible to any effort she made at small talk, and was restless and uneasy when she saw her daughter talking to Mr. Sandford; making attempts to recall Rosie when she was wandering

away to look for ferns, and continually saying that it was getting time to think of returning to the boat.

At last Irene gave it up, and went to enjoy solitude in a little romantic cleft, between the masses of rock, where a busy stream laughed and chattered at her feet, hidden by the long ferns and mosses which grew on its banks, and were bright with the living green which their neighbourhood to the streamlet gave them. Through the trees Irene could catch the outline of Helvellyn; and on the lake, not very far from her, could be seen St. Herbert's Island, where the loving spirit of the hermit was taken to heaven in answer to his prayer, at the same moment when St. Cuthbert, too, the friend who was as his own soul, was also borne thither.

"Legend though it be, it is a story full of beauty," Irene thought; "life with those we love is sweet; but what must be the sweetness of death with them. At the same moment to pierce the veil, and know as we are known?"

"Isn't there a legend about that island yonder?" Sir Philip asked, as if following the train of her thoughts.

Irene had not heard his footstep, and turned quickly. But she answered,—

"Yes; there are the ruins of a hermitage there, where St. Herbert lived—St. Cuthbert's friend, you know."

"I don't know; tell me."

She repeated the story in a few words, but in her own simple way.

"You were thinking of those old men when I came and disturbed you?" Philip asked.

"Yes; I like the story, and I have often told it to Cuthbert. It possesses an interest for him, as the name

is his. He wishes to take me with him, he says, when his time comes; poor little man!"

"You are his Herbert, then," said Sir Philip, with a smile.

But Irene did not smile. "Yes; I suppose I am. My name, too, is Herbert; it was my mother's maiden name, and I bear it from that reason."

"Well," said Sir Philip, earnestly; "poor little Cuthbert will, I doubt not, go very early to his rest; but there will be many, I should think, to pray a contrary prayer to his—many who could not spare you."

"I don't think so. I was everything to one who is gone from me; but since then it has been different."

There was always a fascination for Sir Philip in listening to Irene; her conversation was so unconventional; and if he had put it into words, he would have said it *rested* him.

"Why should it?" he asked; "why should it be different?"

"Death has separated us—my mother and me—and I could often have prayed St. Herbert's prayer. But it is all for the best—though that is such a hackneyed thing to say. Still, there is a loneliness sometimes—just that miss of certain sympathy and certain interest in joys and sorrows—which is not to be felt with every one or with many——"

"Mothers and daughters, in my experience of life, are not often so much to each other."

"No," Irene said, with a sad smile; "I don't think they are."

And here another footstep made her turn her head; and the footman, Percy, came to say that he was sent to

look for Sir Philip, by Mrs. Dennistoun's order, and that she was afraid it was getting late.

Irene rose at once, her hands full of ferns and blue-bells, which still lingered amongst the roots of trees, and Philip followed at a leisurely pace.

Mrs. Dennistoun was standing by the lake at the spot where the boat had been moored, and was evidently much disconcerted at the continued absence of Mr. Sandford and Rosie, and greeted Irene with—

"Really, Miss Clifford, unless you wish to spend the night at Keswick, I wish you would make haste. Philip, have you any idea where your sister is gone? Oh, here she is. Now, pray, let us get off as quickly as possible. I thought, Rosie, you understood that we intended leaving this island at four o'clock. We have to get across the lake, and then drive to the station at Keswick."

"I am very sorry I am late, mamma," Rosie said, in a tone which might have disarmed any displeasure.

And Philip came to the rescue with, "Never mind, Rosie; Sandford and I can pull at a tolerable rate. Take the rudder, child."

But Rosie was dreamy and confused, and sent the boat off in such a zigzag fashion, that Mrs. Dennistoun screamed; and her brother said—

"Miss Clifford, will you take her place?"

And then, in an incredibly short time, they were all in the carriage again, driving from Rodham to Rockdeane.

Everyone was silent and preoccupied; and it might be called the calm before the storm. That night, when Irene had been some time in her room, Rosie's tap was heard, and she came in, with her hair on her shoulders, and threw herself into Irene's arms, sobbing with all the passionate grief of eighteen.

"I have been to mamma, to tell her, Irene," she began.

"To tell her what?"

"Oh, you must know! You must guess! And she is so dreadful about it; and she says that when he comes to her to-morrow to ask her consent, she will never, never give it. That, if I like to marry him without, I may; and that, perhaps, Philip may like to give me away, and all that; and oh, heaps of nonsense about Sir Philip Dennistoun's sister, and all the unheard-of people I might marry; and calling him a gentleman farmer—he who might have taken a double first at Oxford, and did come out first in classics—and a year ago, Irene, it would have been thought a grand thing for me. Oh, Irene, tell me what I ought to do."

It was the old, old story. Too vehement and marked an opposition had set the force of the current strong in the opposite direction.

"I wish I could get at Philip," she went on; "he is sure to be wise and kind. I can trust Philip; wouldn't you, Irene?"

"Yes; and all may yet go well," Irene said, tenderly. "Sit down, poor child; you will make yourself ill."

"I feel ill," said poor Rosie. "My head has been aching all day, and I have got a horrid pricking in my throat. Oh, Irene, I have been so happy! why should I be made miserable by mamma? and all because a man a thousand times too good for me, loves me; and has loved me, he says, for years—ever since I was thirteen. Only think of that."

A smile—almost her own sunny smile—broke over Rosie's tear-stained face as Irene made her lie back in her comfortable chair, and bathed her forehead with Eau de Cologne.

"What would you do," Rosie asked, presently, "if you were in my place? You couldn't unlove anyone because you were told."

"No," Irene said, "I could not unlove. I should love on the same; but I could never have married anyone against my mother's will."

"I suppose you have had plenty of opportunities of being married, though you are twenty-four and are engaged to no one?"

"Yes, I might have married," Irene answered; "but I don't know that I ever really loved any one in the sense you mean; certainly no one who has loved me!"

"How funny," said Rosie. "Oh, my head aches so dreadfully."

"You had better go to bed, Rosie. Let me come to your room, and help you; shall I?"

"Oh, I should like it, only that tiresome Evans is hanging about there. My hair has not been brushed yet, and I shall so hate her seeing how red my eyes are. I will go and send her away, and then will you come?"

"Very well," said Irene; "I will come if you wish."

"Come in ten minutes," Rosie said, as she left the room; "and be quiet, because I don't want mamma to hear us."

When Irene went to Rosie, she found her in a fresh burst of crying, which was so violent as to be almost hysterical. A few gentle, firm words were effectual, however, and the poor child lay down in her bed, saying,—

"I'll try to be quiet. Please say my prayers for me; and then would you sleep with me?"

Irene did as she was asked, and afterwards lay down by Rosie; but she tossed and turned from side to side all night. The only thing that quieted her was to hold

Irene's hand in hers. As morning dawned, she fell into a troubled uneasy sleep; .and at eight o'clock, when Evans appeared with a cup of tea, according to custom, she started up in terror, and said she had had such horrid dreams. Irene was not at all satisfied with her flushed face and general appearance; and when she sipped the tea, she said her throat was so sore she could not swallow it. Then she made an effort to get up and dress; and Irene left her to Evans' care, and went to her own room to prepare for breakfast. She had not been there more than five minutes, when Evans came to the door, and said, "Miss Dennistoun is very faint; will you come back, Miss Clifford?"

Irene obeyed; and found that Evans had summoned Mrs. Dennistoun, who had ordered Rosie to return to her bed; and was, when Irene went into the room, sitting at the table, with the pen in her hand, writing a note to ask Dr. Simpson to come to Rockdeane.

CHAPTER VIII.

LIGHT AND SHADE.

"God's fashion is another; day by day
And year by year He tarrieth; little need
The Lord should hasten; whom He loves the most
He seeks not oftenest, nor wooes him long;
But by denial quickens his desire,
And in forgetting best remembers him;
Till that man's heart grows humble, and reaches out
To the least glimmer of the feet of God,
Grass on the mountain tops, or the early note
Of wild birds in the hush before the day,—
Wherever sweetly in the ends of the earth,
Are fragments of a peace that knows not man."

F. W. H. Myers, from "St. John."

Dr. Simpson came with all speed to Rockdeane to answer Mrs. Dennistoun's summons. He prescribed for Rosie; was rather hazy and vague in his opinion of her; and gently hinted that an infantile disease might be impending.

"What do you apprehend, Dr. Simpson?" asked Mrs. Dennistoun. "Rosie and Jasper have both had measles."

"Yes; well, we must not look forward too anxiously. These feverish symptoms may be the result of exposure in the hot sun, yesterday, which is unusually hot for the time of year."

"I have no doubt that imprudent pic-nic to Derwentwater, in the heat of the day, is the cause of Rosie's illness, Philip!" Mrs. Dennistoun said, as she went to the library to communicate the result of Dr. Simpson's visit.

"Really!" said Sir Philip; "does the old Esculapius say as much? If you have got him to give you a direct answer to a question you have been very clever; but I hope there is not much amiss with the poor child."

"She is very feverish and excited. This most foolish fancy she has taken about Mr. Sandford is really most trying. She is too young to think of marriage, and she has seen nothing of the world; moreover I do not wish to encourage Mr. Sandford."

"Have you told him so?" Philip asked.

"I have not had the opportunity; I wish you would prepare him for my determination. It will make it so much easier for me."

"He seems to have made his own cause good with Rosie," Philip said; "and really, though I agree with you about her youth being an objection; and also concede that she has seen little or nothing of the world; still, I do not think Sandford is the man to repulse without sufficient reason."

"Well; at any rate, you are going away with him to-day," said Mrs. Dennistoun, "for a walking expedition, and if you bring him back ——"

"I must know your mind decidedly before I do bring him back," said Sir Philip, in that resolute tone of his; "there must be no playing fast and loose with a man like him."

"You are a warm firm friend, Philip, every one knows. Well; we will see how Rosie gets on. I have left Miss

Clifford with her. She seems to have taken a great fancy to her; it is quite extraordinary. But first, Philip, will you just go over the names with me for the dinner on the 2nd, that you wish to give? I sent out some of the invitations yesterday, before we started; but I think it better to ask you about them. There are the Williamsons, you would not wish them to meet the Bishop and Lady Catharine; and then there are the Lamberts, I don't think the Tilletts would like to meet them. We have not seen them at a single dinner; certainly at none of the Canon's houses, nor ——"

"They are very nice people, nevertheless," said Sir Philip, quietly; "it will be all the greater novelty for them to be met here."

"But, dear Philip, I think as we are new in the neighbourhood we must be careful not to make mistakes, social mistakes, which may hurt people's feelings, or give offence. Dinners are so different to garden parties, or, indeed, to any large party. Then there is Mr. Frere; he is only the incumbent of a small church."

"I wish the list to stand as I wrote it out," said Philip; and again Mrs. Dennistoun felt there was no appeal. "It is perfectly ridiculous to run in narrow grooves in these matters. I will never do it, if I can help it; but if Rosie is going to be ill, the dinner party will vanish into thin air, and this meeting of incongruous elements must be postponed, *sine die*."

"Oh! I hope not, indeed," was Mrs. Dennistoun's reply, as she left the room.

After luncheon, Sir Philip and George Sandford started on their walking expedition, intending to be absent for two or three days. Mrs. Dennistoun had first to encounter what she dreaded,—the open avowal of

Mr. Sandford's love for Rosie. She was less vehement in her opposition than she had been with Rosie herself; and indeed temporized, and talked so much about dear Sir Philip's wishes, that the good fellow shouldered his knapsack with a light heart, though Rosie's illness, and not being able to see her again, was a great blank. But he thankfully accepted Sir Philip's comfort, "Never mind, old fellow, you must come back again on Saturday; and Rosie will be all right then."

But Rosie was not all right on Saturday. Sir Philip had left no directions for his letters to be sent on to him; indeed, for two days, it was delightful to him to be free to wander with his friend, over hill and dale, as of old, amongst glaciers and snow mountains. It was pleasant to forget the new life for a short time; and he and his companion were sorry to set their faces homewards on Saturday morning. Sir Philip had had no communication with Rockdeane since he left it; and when he and George Sandford drove up to the door in a cab, about two o'clock, and passed under the outspread wings of the old eagle, there was a stillness in the house, which reminded him of the evening when he had first crossed the threshold. Old Forrest appeared, when he heard the arrival, and said to Sir Philip, with a grave face :—

"Miss Dennistoun is very ill, Sir Philip; it is scarlet fever."

"Where is Mrs. Dennistoun?" Sir Philip asked.

"Well, sir, Mrs. Dennistoun is very much alarmed about Mr. Jasper, and she has taken him away this morning to Keswick."

"And who is with Miss Dennistoun?"

He had scarcely asked the question, when a small figure, he knew well, came lightly down the wide staircase. Pausing half way, Irene said :—

"Are you afraid to speak to me? Perhaps, we had better talk at this distance."

"Come into the drawing-room, please," was Philip's answer. "Afraid!" he repeated; "what should I be afraid of?"

"Scarlet fever is very infectious," Irene said; "but I take all reasonable precautions." Then, catching sight of Mr. Sandford's anxious distressed face, she turned to him, and said, "Rosie is very ill, but not dangerously ill; she will soon be better, I trust."

"Thank you," said George Sandford, warmly, as if her assurance were an immense relief; "and who is taking care of her, if Mrs. Dennistoun is gone?"

"I am," said Irene, simply. "We have a nurse from the Nursing Institute at Rodham; but I am always with Rosie."

"It ought not to have been allowed; it ought not to have been thought of for an instant," said Sir Philip, eagerly. "Have you ever had the scarlet fever?"

"Oh! no; but that has nothing to do with it. I am very glad to stay with Rosie, especially ——"

She stopped; and George Sandford continued to pace up and down the hall. Then Sir Philip said, leading the way to the drawing-room, "Let me hear all about it, please."

He shut the door, gave her a chair, and repeated, "Let me know all about it. How is it you are left here?"

He looked so stern, and almost angry, that Irene hastened to answer:—"One very good reason is, that my sister, Mrs. Williamson, is afraid to have me back into her house, lest I should carry infection to the children. I was going home yesterday morning, when Dr. Simpson first pronounced Rosie's illness to be scarlet fever. But Forster came, in answer to my note, to say

that Mary was too terribly frightened to see me. It would be a serious matter to take it to Cuthbert, certainly."

"Yes; there is some reason in this," said Sir Philip; but how is it you did not go with Mrs. Dennistoun and Jasper?"

"I have not seen them since the night before last; as I had been with Rosie throughout, Mrs. Dennistoun was naturally afraid of me."

"Unnaturally," Philip murmured between his set teeth.

"I had a very kind note from her," Irene said; "you must make every allowance for the fear of infection; and Jasper is, of course, Mrs. Dennistoun's first thought. He is a very delicate boy; and indeed I think Mrs. Dennistoun was much to be sympathized with. Dread of infection must be so difficult to fight against."

"You do not speak from experience, evidently," Sir Philip said.

"No; I could not feel afraid when a thing came to me as this did. It is quite different if we run into danger wilfully. I think I had better go back to Rosie now. Mrs. Mason has been so kind as to send up all I want to Rosie's little sitting-room. So I may not see you again; good-bye."

Before Sir Philip could reply, she was gone; only pausing in the hall to say, as she passed George Sandford, who was lying back full-length in one of the wide old-fashioned chairs, "I think and hope all will go well with Rosie; perhaps you and Sir Philip had better set off on another walking tour;" and then with a smile, her rare sweet smile, she went lightly up the staircase, and vanished, just as Sir Philip rejoined his friend.

"She is the angel of this house now, and no mistake," said George Sandford. "What is to be the next move?"

"Indeed, I don't know; it is an awkward position."

"I almost think, Philip, we had better take her advice," said George Sandford, "and set out on the tramp again. I hardly think I should like to go beyond reach, till I know how your sister is. That is, if you are not quite tired of me."

"I must look at my letters first," said Sir Philip, "for I believe I have a dinner coming off at the Bishop's to-night. I have a vague idea that it is so; but I must consult my book first. Anyhow, Sandford, you can stay, the house is big enough; and, if we keep in the left wing, I don't think any harm can come of it."

"I think I should get restless, Philip; I would rather walk it off. Hallo! here is an arrival."

"Mrs. Dennistoun returned, perhaps; but I hardly think so either. It is another Rodham cab from the station;" for the hall door stood wide open, and, as the cab stopped, a shrill treble voice was heard—"Sir Philip!"

"What on earth brings you here, Mrs. Henderson," was Philip's greeting, as the steps were let down, and a brisk little lady, with a handkerchief held to her mouth, which instantly conveyed the mixed aroma of camphor and disinfectants generally, descended nimbly from the cab, handed half-a-crown to the footman, and bid him pay the fare, on which she had agreed, and see that her boxes were taken upstairs. "What brings you here?"

"Why, your stepmother's order, of course. She has never positively fixed a time for a visit; but this morning I received a letter, intreating me, with a great many pretty

expressions of love, and so forth—which I take for what they are worth—to come off here at once; to play propriety, as I understand it, to two young ladies left alone in Rockdeane, with two young gentlemen, it seems, which is not the thing, you see. But when mothers have only sons to consider, why, only daughters and their friends sink into insignificance. I know your mother, well, Sir Philip; and, as I rather wanted to see this place, I came off from Worcester by the ten o'clock train, to stay and make myself at home as long as I am wanted. Rosie has a nurse and a devoted friend with her, I hear; and I shall only look in now and then."

Mrs. Mason had by this time arrived on the scene of action; and Mrs. Henderson's volubility received a momentary check. Sir Philip, who had been chafing under the scarcely repressed mirth of the servants, as they stood awaiting his orders, was really relieved to see the housekeeper.

"Mrs. Mason," he said, "this lady is Mrs. Dennistoun's aunt. She has kindly come to superintend the nursing."

"Nonsense, Sir Philip; I am come simply to play duenna. I want a bedroom not too near the fever, please; and, perhaps, I may beg the favour of dinner or luncheon. What a huge place this is. More like a castle than a house; and that ferocious old stone eagle over the door quite appalled me as I drove up. I see there is another over that stand—nothing but eagles. Now, shall I follow you?" she continued to Mrs. Mason, whose thick black silk stood out in grand contrast to the thin, grey alpaca dress of the little spinster, who moved as if on wires, and had all the fluttering, restless movement of a bird.

"You do not introduce me to your friend, Sir Philip,"

said Mrs. Henderson, as she passed George Sandford; "but I think I have seen him at Codrington Villas. Ah! that was before we passed under spread-eagles when we entered our house!"

"What a ridiculous old person," exclaimed Sir Philip, when Mrs. Henderson was out of hearing. "Of all women in the world, I think Mrs. Dennistoun is the one for expedients. The bare idea of rushing off at a tangent from the scarlet-fever, and sending for this antique aunt of hers, to make believe she was to share the burden left on Miss Clifford's shoulders! But, I must go now, and look after my letters; I shall find an accumulation, I am afraid. I forgot luncheon, Sandford, let us go into the dining-room first, and discuss ours, before that little old lady appears upon the scene."

But George Sandford was not hungry; and, ill at ease, he swallowed a glass of sherry, and then rose, apparently having made up his mind.

"Well, I am off, Philip," he said; "I shall be in the way here; I will look in again in a day or two, and hear how things are going on. But I feel as if I must walk; like the man with the cork leg—eh?"

"Come, cheer up, old fellow," said Sir Philip; "the Rose will come out freshly again, after this. I have no fears about her; and I will settle matters for you as soon as possible. I don't think we shall have much more difficulty with Mrs. Dennistoun."

"Thank you; I hope you are right. I shall only take this," said George, shouldering his knapsack. "I will leave my traps here as a hostage; and now I am off. Perhaps you think I am afraid of the scarlet-fever, too," he said, as he was walking away. "It looks rather like

it; but, on the contrary, I think the best thing I could do would be to catch it."

"Hardly," said Philip; "but, if you feel any symptoms approaching, you can come back, you know, and we will instal Mrs. Henderson as your head nurse."

George Sandford gave a significant shrug of his shoulders; and Sir Philip retired to his study.

There was, as he expected, a large pile of letters. One from Mrs. Dennistoun lay on the top. It was full of superlative adjectives, and those emphatic strokes of the pen against which Irene had inveighed to her sister.

She had really been greatly distressed, and could not make up her mind what to do with Jasper. She had nowhere to send him; for he repudiated the idea of going to Worcester, to her aunt, Sophia Henderson. So she had thought it best to take him away. Miss Clifford had promised to send her a bulletin of her darling Rosie twice a day; for, if letters were passed through disinfectants, it was safe. Mrs. Dennistoun begged Philip not to expose himself to infection; and reminded him of his engagement to dine and sleep at Bishop's Court that evening. She had herself written to put off the dinner for the 2nd, and several other engagements which were falling due.

Sir Philip could scarcely repress an exclamation of impatience as he read this letter. It bore upon it the impress of the writer, as, perhaps, most letters do. Next came a thick cream-coloured envelope, with a pretty cypher, with scent about it just enough to be agreeable, but not intrusive. The writing was bold and decided, and was Lady Eugenia Le Marchant's. She began by saying that the resignation of the Member for

the Eastern Division of the County was now decided. Of course Sir Philip would come forward, and would most probably have no opposition. Would he bring with him the volume of Browning's poems, which he had promised; for she hoped he had not forgotten that the Bishop and Lady Catharine were looking to him for help in entertaining a party of dull country squires on Saturday evening—all to be won to his side if there should be an opposition. It was, on the whole, a pleasant note to read, and pleasant writing to decipher—so large and clear; and he turned it over several times, and read and re-read it, with a smile hovering about his mouth.

Then he applied himself to the other letters. Several of them bore upon the same subject—the resignation of Mr. Seahurst, and the desire that was felt by many of the leading representatives of the more Liberal interest of the neighbourhood that Sir Philip would lose no time in coming forward; and Sir Wilton St. John had written from his house in London, expressing his willingness to nominate him, if he desired it.

Something in Sir Philip responded to this idea of taking his seat in the House. He felt within him the power of thought; and the more useful, though, perhaps, scarcely greater power of expressing his thoughts well. There was in him nothing of the wild, impetuous fever of many youthful spirits of the day, who, in the cry for something new, forget or ignore that, in some instances, the old is better. Nor was Sir Philip Dennistoun in the first excitement of early manhood. He had arrived at the maturity of four and thirty years; and there was never in him any undue haste, or fiery zeal, though he had unfailing energy, and an indomitable will, when the need arose.

It has been well said that we are often surprised by a failure in those we know, at the very point where we thought them so strong. Looking back into the far past, it has been ever thus. Since the days when the brave, courageous prophet, who had defied the god Baal in the face of all his fierce followers, and had stood calm in the midst of the surging crowd—resolute and firm; who had not been afraid to lift his voice, and proclaim the wrath of God, to that unscrupulous king, who held all human life cheap, when it lay in the way of his selfishness or ambition; and yet, in the very hour of victory, Elijah could go to the God of Hosts with the half querulous, faint-hearted cry—"It is enough, Lord; take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers!" From that prophet onward, the instances are numberless; of the bold, lion-hearted Peter failing as a coward in the hour of trial; of St. John, the loving and beloved, betrayed into vehemence and intolerance. In sacred and profane history it has been so, and in everyday life we are met with the same thing.

Sir Philip Dennistoun, who seemed unlikely to be swayed by the opposition or flattery of others, was undoubtedly much pleased by the interest which Lady Eugenia Le Marchant showed in his future. He almost confessed it to himself, that an evening at Bishop's Court was full of attraction; and yet, as he left Rockdeane and walked down into Rodham, having left orders for his carriage and servant to call for him at Ecclestone Square, he could not repress a regretful feeling as he thought of his bright little sister on her sick-bed, and the sweet gentle presence of Irene ministering to her with no selfish fear or thought of herself, or the probability of her taking the infection from Rosie.

Mr. Williamson was alone in his study when Sir Philip arrived. He had several matters of business about which he wanted to consult him; and then he gave him the letter which more directly bore upon the question of the election for the eastern division of the county.

"I shall let them nominate me," he said. "Do you think there will be much opposition—or, indeed, any? Sir Wilton St. John seems to imply that I shall merely have to walk over the ground."

"Most probably it will turn out so," Mr. Williamson said; "and I think you are the man to blow the trumpet in the House with no uncertain sound."

"Wait till you hear that I have the chance. Well; I must put this in your hands. I am going to dine at Bishop's Court to-night, and I daresay I shall hear plenty of politics talked there. And now to turn to matters domestic. This is very unfortunate about my poor little sister, people are as afraid of scarlet fever as if it were the plague."

"Yes, I am very sorry about Irene; but Mary was panic-struck, and I did not like to press the point. However, Irene's letter sets me at rest, inasmuch as she seems to feel herself useful to Miss Dennistoun. She is useful wherever she is; really, her loss in our house is felt everywhere—especially by poor Cuthbert."

"I should like to go upstairs and see him. I suppose there can be no possible danger in my doing so. I have not seen Rosie; and Miss Clifford kept at a very respectful distance from me. I would not go into Rosie's room purposely; you are not afraid," he said, as Mr. Williamson seemed to hesitate.

"No, not in the least; nor do I suppose my wife could

think there was any risk, if you are so good as to wish to see poor Cuthbert. I was only going to tell you that the mail is in; and I have had no acknowledgment from New Zealand for that legacy of £10,000, which I transmitted in October. I have been looking over Mr. Balfour's books, and I see the allowance which was made, regularly entered. Look, here is one entry;" and Mr. Williamson took from his desk a book, and, passing his finger down the page, stopped now and then, and read: "Transmission of £250 to S. D. C.;" then, "Acknowledgment of £250 by S. D. C., as by receipt—"

"Well; evidently S. D. C. is not so grateful for the legacy as she should be—or he should be. I suppose you have no clue to this mystery, Williamson?"

"No; it has evidently been carefully guarded. But I confess I think it is a little odd that the sum of £10,000—a considerable sum—should not be acknowledged."

"Perhaps S. D. C. expected more," said Sir Philip, lightly; "or, perhaps, she is gone where she wants no more pounds, shillings, and pence."

"In that case, I think the banker at Canterbury would have made some sign. But we must leave the dead past to bury its dead."

A message coming for Mr. Williamson that he was wanted at his office, he had to leave Sir Philip, who found his way into the drawing-room. Cuthbert was lying quiet and unoccupied on his sofa, and turned his eyes wearily to the door, as Sir Philip opened it.

"Well, my boy," he said, cheerfully, "so you are all alone."

"Mother and Randal and Hilda are out," Cuthbert said. "I am so glad to see you, Sir Philip! It is such an enormous time since you were here. Do you know

what Auntie is going to do? Mother would not let her come home—and, oh! I do want her so—and I am so afraid she should catch the scarlet fever."

"Your aunt is very well," Sir Philip answered, as the eyes, so like Irene's, were turned full upon him. "She is taking care of my sister; but I do not think she will get the scarlet fever, for she is not in the least bit afraid of it; and that has so much to do with it."

"Yes," said the boy; "but Auntie couldn't be afraid. She wrote me a little note," he went on, taking a crumpled piece of paper from under the pillow, which had evidently been saturated by disinfectants, for the writing had a blurred and blotted look. "She is sorry not to be with me, but glad to be with Rosie—Miss Dennistoun, I mean—and she says she has a lovely little room to sit in, and that she can get on with her story."

"Her what?" asked Sir Philip.

"Oh, don't you know? Auntie writes lovely stories; and the money she gets for this one, was to have taken her and me to Orchard Leigh—the village where Grannie and she lived—down in Devonshire; and papa and mother were going abroad—to Switzerland, I think—to see the snow-mountains that you used to tell us so many things about, and show us all those beautiful pictures you painted. You never come here now, and talk about them."

"My dear boy," said Sir Philip, evasively, "I have to talk about things which are not half so pleasant: but I will tell you a story now, if you like."

"Oh, thank you! About the day when it was getting so dark on the mountains, and you could scarcely see the little notches you cut out of the wall of ice for your feet; and you went back because there was a boy who was

frightened, and you tied him to your rope? That was the story Auntie liked best."

Sir Philip told it; and, to Cuthbert's delight, took a pencil and some paper out of his little drawing-case, and illustrated the story as he went on. All too soon the wheels of the carriage were heard, and Sir Philip had to go. Somehow it was worth a great deal to Philip, when the child looked up at him, and said,

"Thank you for coming to see me. Auntie says help is sure to come when we are at our worst; and I was very nearly crying like a baby when you came in; and now I feel quite jolly."

Sir Philip's meeting on the stairs with Mrs. Williamson rather took off from the pleasure which Cuthbert's gratitude had given him.

"Run up, Randal and Hilda; don't stop a moment. Oh, Sir Philip! I am always so charmed to see you. But have you been near Rockdeane? I am so terribly afraid of scarlet fever!"

"I don't think there can be any ground for your fears. I was not in the house more than two or three hours; and I only saw Miss Clifford for ten minutes."

"Oh! then, I am quite relieved. I can't help it, Sir Philip; I am a perfect coward about infection, I know; Irene often puts me into the most horrid fright when she goes into those dreadfully low parts of the town. I was really sorry not to have her home; but what could I do with these children? And I hear Mrs. Dennistoun is so alarmed that she has gone to Keswick with your brother."

"Yes; and an aunt of hers has come to take the head of the establishment in her absence. I am going to dine and sleep at Bishop's Court, I think the carriage is

waiting," said Sir Philip. "I will look in to-morrow, on my return."

"Oh! that will be very nice," said poor Mrs. Williamson, whose fear of offending Sir Philip had been going through a sharp struggle with her dread of scarlet fever. But ought you to return to Rockdeane yourself? Do be careful."

"There is a tradition that I had this dreaded scarlet fever in the days of my youth," said Sir Philip; "so I am invulnerable, I should think. Good-bye."

He was in his carriage the next moment, and driving out to Bishop's Court; his mind full of many things, past, present, and to come; but, through all these, there was a presence, which would not be wholly put aside, taking the form of the little, quiet, self-possessed woman who had paused half way down the wide, antique staircase at Rockdeane that morning, and had asked, "Are you afraid to speak to me?"

There is no doubt that simple, truthful souls carry with them an influence in the most trivial things, which is felt and acknowledged more by the refreshment of their presence in this false, unreal, hollow world, than by any actual and defined impression which they leave upon us.

Lady Eugenia Le Marchant was in her brightest and most attractive mood to-night. The Bishop and his wife looked at her, and wondered if she could ever be the languid, indolent girl, with whose real and fancied illnesses and ailments they were often so oppressed.

Her eyes were sparkling, her cheeks tinged with colour, and her conversation bright and clever. Lady Catharine Weston, in the simplicity of her heart, remarked to one of her friends that Eugenia had been a great deal stronger

lately; and that she was able to do many things which, a year ago, would have knocked her up.

"I suspect, my dear Lady Catharine," said the good lady, in reply, "your niece only wanted an object in life —an interest, I mean."

Then Lady Catharine rose on the defensive.

"Eugenia has never wanted interests," she said; "she has a very intellectual and refined mind. I have often felt that her companions here have not been such as she ought to have. Old people, like the Bishop and myself, must be very much behind her. Education for women was not thought so much of in my young days."

"No, nor in mine," was the reply; "but I do think young people were taught to have more consideration for others, and more respect to their elders and superiors in age. It may be all very well to read Dante in the original, and all those sort of books; but there are more important things, in my judgment, which ought to go before all these. I am an old-fashioned person, my dear Lady Catharine; and I understand by the higher education of women something very different to all I hear talked of now-a-days. Lady Eugenia seems to have found some one now who is suited to her," the old lady went on, glancing in the direction of Sir Philip Dennistoun, who was leaning against the mullion of the bay-window, while Lady Eugenia sat in a low chair, and was talking eagerly, as she looked up at him, and he was responding with a smile, which was full of pleasure and interest.

"Is that to come off, Lady Catharine?" asked another lady, who, in spite of titles and lands, and an enormous idea of her own importance, was a long way from being a gentlewoman. "It looks like it, I must say; and I

suppose you would approve it. There is nothing like a little interest of that sort for young ladies who are in the doctor's hands for nerves;" and a disagreeable laugh ended the sentence.

Lady Catharine Weston, though rather flurried and put out by her guest's plain speaking, had plenty of real, simple dignity at her command.

"I don't think it is ever right," she said, "Lady Brestyr, to make a jest of these things. Eugenia is much stronger; and the Bishop and I are very thankful to notice it. Now, will you come into the conservatory, I have such a beautiful new Begonia, which the gardener brought in to-day. I should like you to see it."

The two ladies exchanged significant glances, and followed their hostess. As they passed the window, Lady Catharine paused to say,—

"Do not sit too long by the open window, Genie; it is getting damp. For a heavy dew falls after these hot days of early summer," she added, to her companions.

"We must not transgress," said Sir Philip, as Lady Catharine passed on. "Will you move, or shall I close the window?"

"Oh, neither; thanks. Aunt Catharine is always full of little crotchets about damp and dew, and such like. But, tell me, have you had any talk with that old man with the gray moustache—old Colonel Hutchinson—he would be so important as an ally. Do make up to him, and be civil, and sweet if you can. Get him upon the Crimea; and tell him you have heard of his exploits at Alma. You see I want to put you up to a little electioneering. Then there is that rough-headed, red-faced man, who sat opposite you at dinner, Mr. Westerby. I made Uncle Richard invite him to night, for he is certain

to be a warm supporter. Of course you must stroke him the right way, too. Let me see—tell him you have heard of the extraordinary success he had on the Moor last August, and of the number of grouse he bagged. You must, really, get round him; for this man they are talking of bringing forward in the old high and dry Conservative interest, is a relation of his. He is to sleep here to-night, so you must watch your opportunity."

"I am afraid I shall not be so *au fait* at electioneering as you would wish."

"Oh, but you must try," she said. "I would not have you defeated for anything. When we come to London next year I have made up my mind to hear your speech on the new Reform Bill. You will have to take a house in London, of course, and bring out your sister."

"My poor little sister," Sir Philip said; "she is enduring all the miseries of scarlet fever, just now. I have only been in Rockdeane for a short time, and I have not seen her to-day, so I cannot bear about infection with me, or I should not have come here."

"Of course not," said Lady Eugenia; "besides, I have had the scarlet fever, and don't mean to catch it from you. Only keep your own counsel; don't tell the dear old people; they might turn nervous. I do hope your sister will soon get well. She is so pretty, and so simple and sweet; I admire her, extremely. Quite a Rose without thorns. I also have taken a fancy to that quiet little Miss Clifford, your lawyer's niece."

"Sister-in-law," Sir Philip corrected.

"Oh, yes; sister-in-law. She has a face which always reminds me of some of the saints or madonnas one sees in the foreign galleries; she is not at all like every-day people; and her manners are perfect. I have seen her

several times when those pretentious Rodham bankers and people have been ignoring her, and talking big and grand at her—not to her. At a garden party, last summer, at the Hornes', before you came, and when we thought old Sir Jasper was the only possible resident at Rockdeane, I saw a most delightful scene: Mrs. Tillett was hanging over me, and talking of all the grand people she could think of, while Miss Clifford sat by; how she had dined here, and her daughters had been to luncheon there; and how Sir Wilton St. John's daughter was coming to stay with them, for she and Helen were such great friends; and how these little garden reunions were very nice for the townspeople—the Hornes were so good in asking every one. I could not resist it; the wicked fit seized me, and I turned to Miss Clifford, and said,—'How kind of the Hornes to ask you and me!' She saw the joke; and such a smile broke over her face, as she answered,—'Very; but I do not know many people here, and I am rather tired of it.' You should have seen Mrs. Tillett gather up her dignity as she murmured something about dear Helen, and departed."

So Lady Eugenia talked on; and Sir Philip lent himself to the fascination of her voice and bright sparkling manners. There was a want of rest about her, it was true; and there was the want which is always the greatest when it is felt in a woman. But he went to his room that night thinking over much she had said: her interest in him and his success; her evident powers of adaptation; and her keen sense of humour. He was more than ever set upon victory at the election, if it should come to a contest, and the relation of the "rough-headed, red-faced man" should go to the Poll.

Meanwhile, the same bright May evening dragged on rather slowly at Rockdeane. Rosie was restless and feverish, her throat was very sore, and—unaccustomed to illness—she really believed herself to be worse than she actually was. Irene made the sick-room bright with flowers, and showed herself in all her gentle ministry the perfection of a nurse. The Rodham nurse had gone to lie down, that she might be with the invalid at night; and Mrs. Henderson contented herself with putting her head in at the door once or twice, and saying "All going on well, I hope?"

Mrs. Mason took care that Miss Clifford had the best of little repasts sent up to Rosie's sitting-room; but Mrs. Henderson evidently determined to make the most of her position at Rockdeane, so she dined in state by herself in the dining-room, and expressed to Mrs. Mason her desire to keep up the accustomed habits of the family; thus Irene saw very little of her.

The next day she sat by the pleasant window, writing and reading when Rosie did not want her; and enjoyed the sweet calm and repose of the country, with all the zest which such natures whose daily life is necessarily passed in a town, and to whom street sights and sounds are a perpetual jar, can alone understand.

"It is Sunday," Rosie said; "won't you go to church? You can have a carriage, you know."

"No; I shall pass my Sunday here," Irene said. "I should not like to leave you for so long; and, moreover, I might send some one into a fit of hysterics if they recognised me as sitting next them at the Cathedral."

"The poor old Almshouse people will have to do without

you to-day, then, and Mrs. Bolton, too. Oh! dear, it seems more like a year than a week since last Sunday; so much has happened to me. I quite expect Philip will stay on at Bishop's Court, now he is there; and I wonder if Mr. Sandford will come back. I wonder if he cares so very much about me."

"I am sure he does," Irene said. "I have had a note from him to-day, written from some little village near Grassmere; and begging me to tell him how you go on."

"And have you answered? Pray, put the letter through that pink stuff, first," she added eagerly.

"Oh, yes, I am not likely to forget precautions; but try to be still, dear, and I will read to you."

"Irene," Rosie said; "do let me look at the letter—his letter."

Irene could not refuse; but poor Rosie's eyes were too weak to read it, and she had to return it to Irene, and said, "Do read it to me. I must be very ill, for I can't see; the words all run about."

"The letter is very short, dear; only a few words;" and Irene read the request that she would post a bulletin to the address he had given. "Here is your mother's, too," she continued; "shall I read that?"

"It is too long," Rosie murmured wearily. "Poor mamma! but it hurts me to talk, Irene. I do think I am very ill. Oh, I hope I am not going to die. Would you be frightened if you were like me?"

"No, Rosie, I think not; and I hope God has a long life of work for Him for you to do here before He takes you. Now, I shall read; and you must not talk any more, but have some lemonade, and try to go to sleep."

Rosie obeyed; but presently turned her head suddenly,

—"Irene, do you think my hair will all come out? it will be so horrid, and make me like a woolley-headed doll."

Irene could not help laughing; the pathetic and the ludicrous followed so closely upon each other. But poor Rosie could not join in it. Indeed, it was many days before either she or Irene laughed again. Her fever ran very high; and for three nights she was delirious. Then, on the fourth day, a fresh accession of trouble came. Jasper sickened with the fever; and his mother, dreading the inconvenience of lodgings, and the want of proper attention, brought him home; telegraphing her arrival a few hours previously.

It was wonderful how naturally Irene became the general superintendent of the whole nursing staff. Something in her presence seemed to soothe all the sufferers: and the wilful, headstrong boy, his mother's especial care, would submit to no authority but Irene's.

A servant also caught the fever: and the west wing of Rockdeane became a hospital. Sir Philip did not return from Bishop's Court till the end of the week, and then was obliged to submit to a strict quarantine.

Mrs. Dennistoun went hither and thither, with cotton wool, saturated with camphor, held to her mouth and nose; and sent for Dr. Simpson, and the surgeon who acted under his orders, at every conceivable hour of the day or night. At the close of the eighth day Rosie began to mend; but Jasper had many bad symptoms, and the doctors looked grave. Irene felt the most sincere sympathy with his mother, whose idol he was; and the less self-control she testified, the greater that sympathy became. It was after a trying time spent in Jasper's room, when she alone had availed to persuade him to allow his throat to be

cauterized, and had sat with him afterwards till he fell asleep, that Irene put on her hat, and went out into the grounds.

June had come in cold and wet; and the bright May sunshine seemed to have hidden itself behind dark clouds and a leaden sky. Enveloped in her waterproof, Irene did not heed the misty rain; and walked briskly herself up and down the terrace. The strain upon her had been very great for the last few days, and she felt tired and worn out. She had never seen Sir Philip since they had parted in the dining-room ten days before; and she only knew from Mrs. Dennistoun that he had returned to Rockdeane. But now, when he came up to her, and said,—

"I am glad to have met you, at last," she started back.

"I think you had much better not speak to me; please do not. I have been with Jasper a long time; his throat is very bad—and—."

How or why it was, she never knew, but suddenly the overtaxed strength broke down, and Irene struggled in vain with her tears.

"Is the poor boy so very ill?" Philip asked. "I must go to him. It is really folly, and apparent cowardice, that I have not done so before."

"You must not—you must not, indeed," Irene exclaimed, putting out her hand with a sudden gesture; and then, almost instantly recovering herself, she said, "Of course, if you think it right, you must see Jasper; but unless we can be of use, I do not think we ought to run into infection."

"Perhaps not," Sir Philip said; and immediately it flashed through his mind how Lady Eugenia had made

him promise not to go near the fever; urging as a reason,—"If people get hold of the idea that you have been in the way of scarlet fever, you won't be able to go on with the election. Every one will be afraid to let you into their houses."

"Yes," he said; "I won't run the risk of adding to trouble, though, of course, I have not the least fear. You look very pale, and are doing too much, I am afraid."

"Oh! no; it all came to me to do; and therefore I feel sure I am in my right place. The chief thing that weighs upon me is about Cuthbert. I know he misses me, and wants me."

"I have been to see him two or three times," Sir Philip said.

"How very good and kind of you," she exclaimed; "tell me about him."

"He is getting on pretty well. Your notes seem a great comfort; but the child has given up keeping them because his mother was so afraid of their being under his pillow."

"Dear Cuthbert," she replied, with that touch of tenderness in her voice, which, when she spoke of him, always made Sir Philip think how she *could* love, when once the depths were stirred. "Dear Cuthbert! if you are so kind as to go and see him again, will you tell him I have not given up our plan about Orchard Leigh, and that I do not intend him to be disappointed. Give him my best love, and tell him I am quite well—that is, if you really go to see him again."

"I quite intend to do so, if Mrs. Williamson will let me; but now I have been near dangerous people, I don't know what she may say. I am obliged to see your brother-in-law very often just now; for Mr. Hardcastle

is coming forward after all, and we shall have a contest."

"A contest!" she repeated.

"For the representation of the county; you know."

"Oh! yes; you are really going to stand then?"

"Yes, I believe so; are you pleased, or not? A long time ago I told you I must have some active service. I could not live an idle life. I believe, too, I shall be able to do more in this way than any other, and of course, my practice at the Bar is in my favour."

He waited; but Irene did not speak. How different to the enthusiastic interest that Lady Eugenia had shown.

Almost as if reading her thoughts, he went on:—"I shall go on with the church; and I am looking after all the houses in the hamlet. Then, I don't forget the chapel; that must be restored, and I hope to get daily prayer there for the old people, by providing Mr. Bolton with a curate. I intend to stand for the Eastern Division; and what is more, I intend to win the seat, and shall use every fair and honourable means to do so. I don't know that I ever put my hand to anything yet and turned back."

She raised her eyes to his—those pure unworldlike eyes—full of truth, and he read in them something which puzzled him. He waited, thinking she would speak; but she did not.

"You know the family motto," he went on; "you must have read it often enough when you went under the old gateway of Hildyard's Almshouses, before you saw it over the door yonder."

"Yes; 'Ad Cœlum' is a good watch-word for us all, when taken in its true sense. Those who mount on eagle's wings, and renew their strength, have to do something else,

too. I must go in to Rosie, now; she is getting on beautifully; and is a very good patient."

"What else?" he asked himself, as Irene disappeared.

Then there came to him an echo of the old familiar words, and the voice within seemed to whisper—"Wait."

CHAPTER IX.

"THIS, TOO, WILL PASS."

> "How should I not remember?
> Is dusk of day forgetful; or the winter of the sun?"
>
> F. W. H. MYERS.

"THIS, too, will pass," the proverb of some old king of Persia, which he ordered to be written up in every room in his palace, is often brought home to us in our daily experience. The illness which seemed so interminable; the trouble which was at the time all but insupportable; all phases of sorrow and distress; nay, even the keenest pangs of grief which rend bereaved hearts, pass; and we find ourselves insensibly but surely losing the very memory of the past in the present. Doubtless, some scars are left, which never really heal. Doubtless, though "pain and grief are transitory things," and leave us, they do not always leave us as they find us. "But this, too, will pass," may be written on every circumstance of this mutable and perilous life, and a certain amount of comfort may be derived from it. I say a certain amount,—for full comfort, under any trial and any sorrow, comes from a source from which the Eastern king could not draw the waters of consolation. For, if the Christian soul can feel that the fashion of this world passeth away, bearing with it all its sharpest pains, of bodily or mental

anguish, as well as all its fairest and dearest hopes, it can feel, too, that there is an inheritance which fadeth not—incorruptible and undefiled—reserved in Heaven for those who are kept through faith, in hope of the glory which shall be revealed.

Long as was Jasper Dennistoun's illness, and weary as every one about him grew of the irritable convalescence—which seemed harder to his nurses than the illness itself—it came to an end at last. And one morning, in the last week of June, what Rosie called the hospital ward at Rockdeane was closed; and the whole party left it together, for the final purification of the sea-air at Scarborough. Irene was to accompany them; for not one of the number could spare her. Mrs. Dennistoun had grown to rest in her and trust her, in a way which often made Rosie wonder; it was so unlike her mother, to refuge herself in any one. Jasper would submit to her when no other authority availed; and little Mrs. Henderson declared that, of all the young women of the present day that she had ever met, she thought Miss Clifford the most "capable." Mrs. Henderson often used that adjective, without the noun it qualified, and seemed to stretch its significance to any limit.

The Rodham world had not dared to approach Rockdeane; and so, for many weeks, the inhabitants were left without any attention but the cards of inquiry, which were sent by servants, and seldom delivered in person. "It is, of course, quite impossible to hold any communication with the Dennistouns," people said; and there were many stories circulated of the mysterious ways in which scarlet-fever was propagated—by books, by letters, by wearing apparel, by every conceivable thing which existed. Those who were the most eager in their rehearsal of

these terrible stories of infection were those who were aggrieved at what might be considered want of proper attention to them; and from some of these Irene Clifford suffered severely.

"It has always been her aim to ingratiate herself with the Dennistouns; but I fear she will be bitterly disappointed," said Margaret Thornycroft one afternoon, at a croquet party at the Tilletts'; "it has been so transparent."

"What has been so transparent?" asked Mrs. Preston, a quiet little woman, who was one of the few Rodham people that really knew Irene.

"Oh! did you not know what a dead set she made on Sir Philip at one time? Indeed, I dare say she has not given up hopes now; but she will have to do it soon, for I hear that he is really engaged to Lady Eugenia Le Marchant; so all her devotion to his sister and brother will be thrown away; though, to be sure, not quite that, for she has gone to Scarborough with them; and that is a pleasant change in this hot weather."

"Miss Thornycroft," said the little, quiet lady, in reply; "Miss Clifford's stay at Rockdeane was scarcely optional. Her sister was naturally afraid to receive her, with her own young children in the house, who might be liable to take the complaint; but I think you can hardly be aware that Miss Clifford has been the most devoted nurse to Miss Dennistoun and the boy, and that the two doctors both think her services have been invaluable."

"Dear me, Mrs. Preston, what nonsense! A paid nurse, from the Nurses' Institution, has been at Rockdeane all these weeks. I know the Lady Superintendent very well; and she told us so; did she not, Mary?"

appealing to her sister, who was just then brought near the place where Mrs. Preston was defending Irene, by a sharp croquet from her adversary.

"Of course; but, Margaret, if I were you, I would let that poor little Miss Clifford alone. Your strictures may be misinterpreted. I shall really begin to stand up for Irene Clifford; and then Mrs. Preston, I know, will think the better of me. But, after all, I believe Sir Philip is in London, and Rockdeane is undergoing a purifying process; so that, in September, it may be ready for shooting guests, and all the entertainments that Sir Philip will have to give to his constituents. It would be too dreadful if they caught the scarlet-fever. Now, I must return that croquet with interest;" and, with a very professional swing of her own particular mallet, which Miss Thornycroft carried with her to every party, marked with her cypher in red and blue letters, she certainly returned the croquet in grand style, and hit her opponent at an almost incredible distance; thereby eliciting the applause of both sides of the game.

"Mary can play croquet, if she can do nothing else," her sister said, as she departed; "it is a good thing that we all find something in which we excel." And then Margaret Thornycroft moved towards another group of people, and sowed further seeds which will spring up and bear fruit; whether for good or evil, let those unoccupied women, who spend their time in discussing the imperfections of their neighbours, and imputing to them motives which exist only in their own brains, determine.

It was not till the beginning of August that Irene returned to her brother-in-law's house; soon after Sir Philip Dennistoun had been returned for the Eastern Division

of the County, with such a large majority, that Mr. Hardcastle was left behind on the day of the polling by some hundreds of votes. Irene read the speeches in the papers; and heard Forster Williamson's account of the favourable impression which Sir Philip had made upon his constituents; and one morning, as she was returning from a visit to Mr. Bolton's, she met Sir Philip, just as she was coming out from under the gateway of Hildyard's Almshouses. He was walking with Sir Wilton St. John, his arm linked in his. He raised his hat, and smiled; and then suddenly stopped, and, saying to his friend, "One moment," he turned, and overtook Irene.

"I have not seen you since the election," he said. "I hope all my battles may be as easily won as this has been."

The colour came to Irene's face; and she felt a congratulatory speech was expected from her.

"I am very glad you were successful," she said, in her low, sweet voice. "I liked your address very much; it said in ten lines what Mr. Hardcastle tried to say in fifty."

It was not like the enthusiastic reception and congratulation which Lady Eugenia had given him a few days before, but it sounded—like the speaker,—true, and simple, and real.

"Thanks," he replied; "brevity is the soul of wit, you know. Have you heard from Rosie since they went to Brighton?"

"Yes, twice. Jasper seems better, and will be well enough to go to Eton after the vacation, she thinks."

"I hope so; and I dare say you know that Sandford is put on a year's probation by the powers that be; and that after her first season in London, if Rosie holds firm,

he is to have her. But I will try and come in to-morrow, before I go up to town, and discuss matters further. I have been looking up the grouse the last few days, or you would have seen me before. Good-bye."

He shook hands with her warmly, and went to rejoin the impatient Sir Wilton.

"Who was your fair friend, Dennistoun? What would the Lady Eugenia say? Don't look so unsuspecting and so innocent; you know you have got that pretty little piece of business to come off next. Another easy triumph, I suspect. I hope there is not another competitor in the field, in the person of that little lady you have just parted from with so much reluctance. Who is she?"

"Miss Clifford," answered Sir Philip, shortly.

"That does not enlighten me, I am afraid. Miss Clifford! What, one of the Lancashire Cliffords? and they were a good old Roman Catholic family."

"No. I am not learned in her family pedigree," said Sir Philip. "She is the sister-in-law of my lawyer, and friend, Mr. Williamson—Irene Clifford. Now, are you satisfied?"

"Not quite," was the rejoinder; "nor do I think the lady at Bishop's Court would be. But—*revenons à nos moutons*—how about the shooting party at Rockdeane?"

So they went on to talk of many other things; and Irene's name was not again mentioned. The next day passed, and Sir Philip did not come to Ecclestone Square. Flowers, and fruit, and a brace of grouse, were brought in the evening, addressed to Master Cuthbert Williamson, but that was all. The boy stroked the birds, and watched Irene as she arranged the flowers in the vases,

and took out some of the choicest to put into her sister's hair, who was dressing for a party upstairs.

"I wish he had come instead of sending all these things, Auntie," Cuthbert said; "I would rather see him than the flowers. And he is going away to-morrow, too. Didn't you say so, Auntie?"

"Yes, dear;" and there was something very like a sigh which accompanied the words. "But I must go and look after Mamma now, and put these flowers in her hair, and then we will have a happy time. When Randal has done his lessons, I will read to you."

"Your last story; is it finished? Oh, how delightful!"

"It is not only finished, but printed. I have got the proofs; and perhaps we shall go to Orchard Leigh after all!"

"Auntie!"

She ran away smiling, and saying "we shall see"—her hands full of flowers and ferns—and tapped at her sister's door.

"Come in. Oh, Irene, I am glad it is you! I want my hair dressed again. Nurse has done it so abominably; and Hilda was so tiresome, and pulled the things about so dreadfully. It must all come down. Oh, what lovely flowers! Where did you get them?"

"They came from Rockdeane, for Cuthbert. I thought you would like some for your hair."

"Did Sir Philip bring them after all, then? I thought he would not go without saying good-bye."

"No; he sent them with some grouse, and some beautiful fruit. Now, do you know it is getting late? Let me begin your hair."

Irene soon smoothed her sister's abundant hair, and dressed it with taste and skill. The whole effect, when

it was complete, was very gratifying; and Mrs. Williamson said,—

"Really, these flowers are a wonderful addition. Mrs. Tillett will not have anything to equal them."

Irene seized the happy moment; and, as she was putting a few finishing touches to her sister's hair, she said,—

"Mary, if you and Forster go to Paris, will you let me take nurse and the children to Orchard Leigh? Cuthbert has set his heart upon it."

"Oh, it is so much too far—so much too expensive a journey. I am sure Forster will say so. Just put that bit of maiden hair a little more to the left, Irene."

"I have the money all ready for the journey, Mary," Irene said, "and we can have the little house at Orchard Leigh, on the cliff—Eden Villa—the one that used to be covered with such beautiful roses in old days. I wrote to Mrs. Stephens, and asked her about the rent. We can have it from the 1st of September for six weeks for two guineas a week. May I write to say we will engage it?"

"I will speak to Forster about it. It might be rather nice; and we might come to you when we have been our trip. Forster needs the complete change so much; and there is the doctor there who used to attend Cuthbert in our dear mother's time. I don't think it is at all a bad idea. But how did you get the money, Irene?"

"I earned it with my pen," said Irene; "it is mine, to do what I like with; and Cuthbert and I shall enjoy this together."

"There is Forster calling me; and there is the cab. Do give me my cloak. It is a pity you are not going, too. I must just run into the drawing-room and show myself

to Cuthbert. Good-bye, dear; thank you. You are a first-rate lady's-maid."

Mrs. Williamson tripped lightly away, and Irene was left with the *débris* of flowers and every conceivable thing that could make a room untidy, lying here and there. She busied herself in arranging the dressing-table, closing and locking her sister's jewel-box, which Hilda's little fingers had rifled and upset, and then she went to the window and sat down to rest before going to her nephews, as she had promised.

"Why should I be disappointed, or care?" she asked herself. "He is always kind and friendly to me when we meet. What can I want more? Even if it had been, as I suppose I was beginning to be so silly as to think it was, it could not have been good for me. I don't think those high aspirings of his would have suited me. He would have left me so far behind; it is so much better as it is. And then I know that the One I love best has ordered my life—making me of use when I little expected it—and showing me my work and giving me peace in it."

In another five minutes Irene's face was bright and happy. She went to Hilda's little bed and sang her her Evening Hymn, and then delighted Cuthbert and Randal by reading to them the proof-sheets of her new story.

The next morning, on his way to the station, Sir Philip came in to say the Good-bye which he had promised. He did not stay long; and, as he left the house, Mrs. Williamson said—

"I do begin to believe it is true, and that he is engaged to Lady Eugenia Le Marchant. I heard some people talking of it last night. After all you have done for the family, Irene; subjecting yourself, and, indeed, all of us,

to the risk of scarlet fever by nursing his sister and brother, and giving up everything for them, I think they might all show a little more gratitude; though, as I always told you, you have managed the whole thing very badly. There is no doubt in my mind —not the slightest—that when he first came here, Sir Philip was really very much taken with you. It is entirely your own fault; and, of course, when he found you so stiff and cold, and Lady Eugenia so very much the reverse, he was not slow to discover all she had to bring him, which you have not."

Can there be anything more painful, or anything which jars a sensitive nature more, than to have our very innermost and scarcely-acknowledged thoughts and feelings openly discussed. The torture that some of us undergo from this too common habit cannot be expressed by words. We are all given to talk about each other a great deal more than is wise or right. But the shaft passes by harmlessly and does no real mischief to some dense souls; while to others, bitterness of spirit and tears of self-reproach in secret, are often the results. At least, in all matters relating to marrying or giving in marriage, do let us try to remember that "silence is golden."

The great wish of Irene's heart at this time was accomplished. Mr. Williamson's doctor advised entire rest and change; and the idea of the tour abroad with his wife met with the cordial approval of Dr. Simpson; and, except the misgiving she had about the length of the journey for Cuthbert, Irene felt no difficulty in carrying out her scheme. Mrs. Henderson's kindly offer of a night's rest at her house at Worcester was accepted; and, on the 1st of September, the whole family left Rodham — Mr. and Mrs. Williamson going with the

children and Irene as far as Worcester, and then leaving them to pursue their journey to Orchard Leigh the next day.

The little eccentric old lady gave Irene the warmest reception, and Cuthbert was provided with a room adjoining his Aunt's, and treated with the greatest kindness and consideration.

"He is a sweet boy, my dear, and the very image of you," she said, when, after trotting up and downstairs incessantly that evening, she finally subsided into her easy-chair and took out her knitting. "I took a fancy to you from the moment I saw you, and through all that trying scarlet fever time at Rockdeane you were so patient and pleasant. Dear me! it is to be hoped a rise in life will not spoil you."

Irene laughed.

"I hope I am not likely to be tried."

"Now, my dear, that is nonsense. We shall see you lady at Rockdeane in another year. I am not blind or deaf. Of course I saw and heard a great deal all those weeks at Rockdeane; and, by the tone of my niece's note, I knew she had some very special reason for inviting me. If it had not been for the scarlet fever, and the necessity of somebody going, who was too old to take the infection—as she implied I was, for I am in my seventieth year, my dear, and not ashamed of it either—I should not have seen the grand house for some years; perhaps, never! Poor Carrie is very agreeable and handsome, and dresses well, and is kind in her way; but she is a woman of the world, my dear, and no one knows her better than her stepson does. He reads her through and through with those eyes of his—extraordinary eyes they are. I have often heard it said he would have risen to the very top of

the profession, if this ready-made fortune had not come to him."

"By the help of his eyes?" asked Irene, laughing.

Mrs. Henderson looked at her with her own little sharp beads, which suited so well with her quick restless movements.

"No, my dear; by his brains and by his will," she said. "A resolute will is Philip's. Carrie knows that; and it is my opinion, that poor little Rosie would never have got this concession made about that great awkward lover of hers, who was lounging in the hall at Rockdeane on the day I arrived, if it had not been that she felt he was a friend of Philip's, and that he would stick to him through thick and thin; in short, that opposition was useless."

So the little lady chatted on, and Irene was amused at the children's remarks on her, when she went to kiss them for the night.

"She is just like a little brown sparrow, Auntie," Randal said; "and doesn't she speak out her mind. She said to nurse, just now, 'Make yourself comfortable, and get a good supper. I dislike other people's maids in my house; they are so apt to unsettle my own; but, of course, the invalid boy must have you. His Aunt slaves enough for him as it is.'"

"And, Auntie," said little Hilda; "she said I wasn't to scrape my feet on the ledge of the chair; she's very particular, nurse says."

"But very kind, dear Hilda. Mrs. Henderson is not used to have children in her neat pretty little house; and we must remember how good it is of her to take us all in."

Cuthbert had a restless night, and was so unfit to continue his journey the next day, that Irene yielded to

Mrs. Henderson's entreaty, and gave him a few hours more rest; while she sent a telegram to the house at Orchard Leigh, to say that their coming was delayed for another day; and when, at last, they bid their kind hostess good-bye, she let them depart with great reluctance, and would not hear a word of thanks, only saying that she hoped to see them on their return from Orchard Leigh. How long that return was to be delayed for two of the number, neither Mrs. Henderson nor any one guessed.

Poor Cuthbert, after a fortnight's enjoyment of the sea, and the return to all the scenes, which were dear to him, as to Irene, for the sake of one who was gone, flagged, and got weaker; and it soon became apparent that another abscess was forming on his hip, and he must go through the usual course of pain and suffering, which would render a journey northward impossible for many weeks.

When Mr. and Mrs. Williamson arrived on their return from their tour, it was evident that it was out of the question for him to go home. His father was obliged to return at once; but his mother lingered. Poor Irene had her full share of blame for proposing an expedition which had brought about such results, and her heart sank within her at the reproaches which her sister could not resist heaping upon her.

In vain the doctor assured Mrs. Williamson that the accession of Cuthbert's disease would have been probably developed at home, that it would, perhaps, in the end, be better for him to spend the winter in a milder climate, and that the boy might be better after this abscess, than he had been before. His mother would not take any comfort from this; she thought the doctor was making a nice winter's patient out of her boy, and saw him and

everything else at Orchard Leigh, through a distorted medium. It was a relief, at last, when Mr. Williamson's order came for his wife, and Randal, and Hilda, to go home. Irene felt as if she could bear the burden better alone. She had still friends and kindly neighbours left in the place, where she had spent so many happy years with her mother; and her father's name, who had been the rector of a parish in the neighbourhood, was yet held in honour.

The evening after her sister and the children were gone, Irene was sitting by Cuthbert's side, and looking out on the sea, which could be seen from the window, over the tops of the trees, now wearing once more their autumn livery. She hoped the child was asleep; but, turning her head partly to look at him, she saw his eyes were full of tears, and that the pillow was wet.

"Do you feel so dull, darling, without Randal and Hilda and mamma?" she asked, tenderly stroking back the thick hair from his pale forehead.

"No, Auntie, no. I am only thinking how dull it must be for *you*, and how cross I was this morning, when I said, now nurse was gone, I would not let the new servant Mrs. Stephens sent come near me; it was so very——" Cuthbert's tears choked him, and rendered the rest inaudible. "I mean to let her do everything for me now. You will be making yourself ill, Auntie; your life is spent in nursing sick people, and doing something for others. Please go out for a walk now, and leave me. I shall go to sleep, and it is such a lovely evening; the moon will be so beautiful on the sea. Do go—to please me," he said, beseechingly.

"Very well, dearest, I will go; and when I come back, we will light the pretty reading-lamp, and I will read to you."

The pretty reading-lamp was one of Sir Philip's presents to Cuthbert, and greatly prized. Whenever Irene touched it, it always seemed to bring back the evening when he had brought it to Ecclestone Square and had put it on Cuthbert's little table, as a surprise, before he displayed a new book of sketches. Now, as she took it up and placed it ready by the boy's couch, thoughts of the past came back; and, as she strolled on the cliff and came home by the village, Irene had to fight one of those battles with herself, out of which all true-hearted women, who have God on their side, come out victors.

She turned into the village churchyard, and found her way in the dusk to the white marble slab which marked her mother's resting-place. It was all beautiful and serene, like the close of that dear life in which her own had been so bound up. From afar came the distant murmur of the waves and the shouts of the fishermen, who were getting their nets ready on the shore. There were soft whisperings of the trees in the churchyard, and the sleepy chuckle of an old jackdaw as it settled in its nest in the belfry tower for the night; voices of children in the village street, subdued and mellowed by distance, and the faint moan which came fitfully as the autumn wind wandered through the open space at the top of the lych-gate and sank again to stillness, like a restless and uneasy spirit.

It was a time when—

"From something seen or heard,
Whether forests softly stirred,
Or the speaking of a word,
Or the singing of a bird,
Cares and sorrows cease

For a moment, on the soul
Falls the rest that maketh whole,
Falls the endless peace!

"O, the hush from earth's annoys!
O, the heaven! O, the joys!
Such as priests or singing-boys
Cannot sing or say!
There is no more pain and crying—
There is no more death and dying—
As for sorrow, and for sighing,
These shall flee away!"

When Irene reached Eden Villa, she found Cuthbert all smiles and brightness. The new maid had been so kind, and brought him some jelly, and lighted the lamp; and there was a present of flowers from the Parsonage; and, above all, there was a letter by the late post for Auntie.

The letter proved to be from Rosie Dennistoun, and began abruptly,—

"I have heard that you are all alone, you dear darling Irene; and that you are not coming to Rodham for weeks and months. So I got Philip to make mother let me come and see you. I have to bring my maid—horrid nuisance!—but you see she does for an escort, and you won't mind; for she is a nice little woman, and not fine and stupid. I can stay a week; and I have such heaps of things to say!

"My dear, we have been so busy in London—looking after the swell house in Queen's Gate, of which possession is to be taken in February—and mother has been living in the society of upholsterers. Philip comes backwards and forwards, leaving everything to her, except one little room—a boudoir for somebody—*that* is to be untouched

at present. Then we have had to take several journeys to Eton—just to see how Jasper was—if his little finger ached, or if he had had any roughness or difficulty. On the contrary, things have gone remarkably smooth with him. His head is full of boys with big handles to their names, who are in the same master's house with him—Mr. Knight's house. He is more of a dandy than ever, and not grown an inch, in spite of the elongating process of scarlet fever. One good sign I noticed yesterday. He asked for you; said you were the jolliest woman he knew; and told me to remember him to you. 'No need,' quoth I; 'her memories of you must be sufficiently vivid; especially about the wine-glass!'

"'Too bad to go back to that!'—I now hear you saying it—most peaceful of Irenes! As if it could be of any consequence that he dashed a glass of champagne in your face, because it hurt him to swallow it! But I need not go on, or enlarge. I shall take the eleven o'clock express from Paddington to-morrow morning, and shall get to Exeter—oh, I am sure I don't know when!—but on to Orchard Leigh in the course of the afternoon.

"Ever and always, your loving

"R. C. D."

"P.S.—N.B.—My heart is in the same place as it was last May. My head is covered with little funny flat curls, which disturbs mother's peace of mind. They are making a lot of plaits and rolls to cover them when I come out next spring. Love to Cuthbert."

Irene laughed over the letter, and found that the news it contained was more welcome than she could have believed possible.

Rosie's room, and the maid's room, were all put in order by twelve o'clock the next day; and about six o'clock she came dancing in, full of life, and looking prettier than ever; and threw herself into Irene's arms, and covered her with kisses.

She was in the humour to be pleased with everything; and her spirits were exuberant. She brought baskets of treasures for Cuthbert; and her only disappointment was to find him so weak and suffering, that he could only take a languid interest in what, when he was better, would have enchanted him.

"And you are to be left alone here?" Rosie said, when the happy week had come to its close; and Mrs. Dennistoun, who had returned to Rockdeane, refused to give Rosie a prolonged leave of absence. "How dreadfully dull it will be for you."

"Oh, no," Irene said; "if I could only see Cuthbert better, I should not mind; but I fear the abscess will have to be lanced and probed again, and that does not look like much progress. However, I have faith in Mr. Spencer; he is really a clever surgeon, and has a large practice in the neighbourhood. I love this little place dearly, and would as soon, perhaps sooner, be here than at Rodham, except for thinking that there are some people there who will rather miss me. I wish you would go to Hildyard's Almshouses sometimes, and see the old people and Mrs. Bolton."

"Of course I will, if you wish it; only I shall not know a bit what to say. And I will get Randal and Hilda out to Rockdeane whenever I can. I would do anything for you, Irene."

"I know you would, dear," was the answer.

"Did I tell you," Rosie went on, "that I met him—

Mr. Sandford—the other day in London. It was stiff and horrid; but still I think he would understand I was not changed; only mother made me promise to go on, as if he had never proposed to me, till next May; and then, after I had tasted the sweets of London, if I still held to my promise, and still kept in the same mind, she would hold to hers, and let us be engaged, and," with a little laugh, "married, I suppose."

"You are perfectly right to do as your mother wishes, Rosie; as I have told you before."

"Yes; but, when one thinks of it, it is rather hard. There he was, the other day, in that drawing-room at the St. Johns', when we met quite by chance; and I had to speak to him as if he were anyone—oh, dear!"

"You don't seem broken-hearted," Irene said, with a smile; "I never saw you look so well or so nice; those little shining rings all over your head, and that charming little bow at the top, are most becoming."

"So Philip says; but Philip is altered, changed somehow, Irene. He is so preoccupied; and always seems to be thinking of something. Now, when he was working at the Bar, he had leisure to be merry and silly sometimes. Now, it is always letters and elections, and seats in the House, and politics, and Lady Eugenia. Do you know, Irene, I believe she means to marry him; and he will persuade himself that she is the only woman to be of any help to him in his career, and all that sort of nonsense; but I also believe that they, neither of them, care two straws for each other—don't love each other, I mean; and that, if Philip was a poor, struggling barrister, on circuit again, unable to keep a grand house, or hold his own with all the great people in the county, Lady Eugenia would just as soon think of marrying him

as she would George Sandford, or anyone else of that sort."

The two girls were sitting in the autumn sunshine on the cliff, on a clump of dry heather; and Irene's face was turned from her companion.

"Do not judge others so hardly, Rosie," was her answer, in her low, gentle voice; "you cannot possibly know what your brother and Lady Eugenia really feel for each other."

"I know they are not in love with each other, as I understand love," said Rosie; and then she broke off suddenly, sprang to her feet, with an exclamation of surprise and pleasure, as she ran to meet her brother: "Talk of angels and you see their wings. Why, Philip, what are you come for?"

"Now, I call that sisterly and affectionate; why, I am come to see you, and take you home to-morrow. I thought I should rather like the spree. I am sorry you are not glad to see me."

Irene meanwhile had risen, and stood quietly by; and now held out her hand, as Philip came near her, and said:

"Rosie is sorry to go away; but not sorry to see you, I am sure."

"I came from town to-day, and am bound for Rodham to-morrow; but we must stop for a night half-way, little Rosie; where shall it be—at Worcester? If we don't, we shall have to start so awfully early to-morrow."

"Hereford, not Worcester. Aunt Sophy would not be as glad to see us as she was to see Irene, the 'capable' young woman, who never did anything wrong, except spoil me when I was ill."

"A process which seems to go on, whether ill or well,"

said Philip; but he continued, turning to Irene: "I want to hear about my friend Cuthbert. I am afraid he is much worse. I went to Eden Villa when I arrived, and heard a bad account of him from the maid, who said he was just then asleep, and directed me here to find you. I think Cuthbert ought to have a London surgeon's opinion?"

"His father is coming again soon, and will decide what is best," said Irene; "I have great faith in Mr. Spencer, the doctor here."

"If it were to do him good—or relieve you," Sir Philip added, "I would most willingly telegraph for Paget, or any other London celebrity; and, of course, take the responsibility—the fee, I mean."

"Thank you," Irene said; "I don't think it would be of any real use to Cuthbert. The disease from which he suffers is not so uncommon; and, even in this small place, there is another case almost precisely similar. I think, Rosie," she said, "I will go home now; and leave you to take Sir Philip over Orchard Leigh. We shall have tea at six o'clock."

Sir Philip looked after her as she turned away, and began to whistle, which Rosie knew was an ominous sign.

"Is the boy much worse, Rosie?" he asked presently. "Really, it is very cool of the Williamsons to leave her all the trouble and nursing."

"I don't know that they could help it," Rosie said. "Cuthbert became so much worse here; that is, this new abscess began to form on his hip; and I believe it must run the usual course. The only thing is to keep up his strength."

"And hers, too," said Sir Philip; "these unselfish people never think of themselves. Come; let us

lionize this wonderful Devonshire village on the cliff, or between the cliffs, whichever you like to call it."

Sir Philip strode on, and Rosie had some difficulty in keeping up with him. But he was not conversational, and as Rosie expressed it afterwards—"out of sorts." She parted from him at the door of the little hotel where he was to sleep, and where he said he must go and look out some less travel-stained garments before presenting himself at tea. Cuthbert was carried down into the little dining-room, that he might not miss a moment of Sir Philip's society; and he was all eager anxiety for his arrival. The table was prettily set out by Irene's hand; and when Sir Philip looked in at the open window, from the autumn twilight, he lingered a moment, for the sake of the pleasure the picture, which would have delighted the eye of any artist, afforded him. The little table, with its snowy cloth; the reading-lamp and two candles upon it; Cuthbert's sofa drawn close to the end where Irene presided over the tea and coffee, a soft light falling upon her small, graceful head, with the chestnut hair braided back from the fair, serene brow, as she bent over the boy, and moved one of his pillows for him.

Her white dress, with little sprays of green scattered over it, was fastened at the throat by a brooch, a brooch Sir Philip knew well—the dove, with outspread wings, with the word "Pax" under it, in Roman mosaic. It had been her mother's, and was a relic of the past which he knew was dear to her.

Rosie, in her bright evening dress of some gauzy cerise material, with her cheeks brilliant with the rapid exercise in the air of the autumn evening, her short curls bound with a ribbon like her dress, on which a little gold butterfly was perched, was at the opposite end of the

table; and, as Sir Philip leaned against the widow-sill, unseen as yet, she said,

"That dear old Philip posted along to-night at such a pace that I am quite tired. He always posts when he is rather cross. Oh!" and Rosie gave a little scream, as a little scarlet berry from the sweetbriar bush, which grew by the window, well aimed, touched her cheek. "Philip!—" and the next moment she had run out to meet him.

A very happy evening followed. When tea was over, Sir Philip carried Cuthbert into the drawing-room, and laid him on the sofa there; sitting by his side, as in the days of their early acquaintance, and talking of things which the boy liked best to hear. There was no piano, but Rosie and Irene sang a little German duet together; and then Cuthbert said,

"Auntie, do sing something alone—my song."

"Yes, let us have your song, Cuthbert," Rosie said.

"You have so many, Cuthbert; which one?"

"The tempest rages wild and high."

And Irene sang; her clear, sweet voice lingering over the infinite pathos of "Miserere Domine," and swelling the jubilant strain of the concluding words, "Gloria tibi, Domine."

No one spoke when she ceased; and she rose quietly, and said Cuthbert must go to bed, or he would have a bad night.

"I can carry the boy," Sir Philip said, "if you will show me the way."

Rosie took one of the candles, and preceded her brother, while he raised Cuthbert in his arms."

"It is so nice to have you to lift me," he said; "it feels so safe."

But when he laid him on the bed upstairs, Sir Philip saw that he was biting his lips, and that his face was very pale.

"My boy, have I hurt you?" Sir Philip asked.

"You can't help it; no one can. Even Auntie hurts a little. But I have got much braver now. I try to be a real soldier, and to fight all I can for His sake. You know who I mean."

Sir Philip bent over the child, and kissed him. "God bless you, my dear boy; don't forget me;" and then he was gone.

Rosie went to give the maid some orders about being ready by ten o'clock the next morning; and when Sir Philip returned to the drawing-room it was empty. He saw Irene no more; and only Rosie returned to bid him good night, and to say that she would be quite ready to start at the appointed time the next day. She put her arm through her brother's; and, looking up into his face, said,

"Philip, I don't understand you now. I think," she went on, in her childlike, caressing way, "I think you are making a mistake, and that you and Irene would be so happy together; far happier than you and Lady——"

He repulsed Rosie almost roughly, and said, "You are a mere child, Rosie, and don't know anything about it. Pray do not interfere in my concerns."

"I do understand," she said, trembling, while the tears started to her bright eyes; "I do understand what *love* means, and I do know the difference between those who can love if all things go smoothly, and those who fly off, like swallows, at the first breath of adversity. I do know what Irene is."

"Not another word, Rosie," Sir Philip said, sternly;

and then he repented of his harshness. As he was going down the little garden, he stopped, and held out his hand.

"Rosie, my child, forgive me. I have been horribly savage of late; poor little thing!" and he stroked the curly head, which was only too glad to lean against his shoulder in token of full reconciliation. "I saw Sandford yesterday," he added. "He is living in hope, and is going to spend the winter with the old people at Stow, and he has begun a book of Alpine feats, which he is to write and I am to illustrate. Good night, little one!"

He thought he had seen the last of Irene; but the next morning, after a restless night, he turned out of the hotel, in the mists of the autumn morning, when scarcely a creature was stirring in the little village, and walked over the cliffs. Returning, he passed the churchyard, and went in. By a white marble cross a small figure was leaning, which struck him as at once familiar. He scarcely liked to intrude on Irene at such a moment, and was going to retreat, when she turned her head and saw him.

"You are out early," he said, going up to her.

"Yes; I have had a sleepless night; the poor child has suffered so much. I have scarcely left him, and I come here for a little refreshment almost every morning"

Sir Philip read the inscription on the slab, and saw that both her father and her mother were buried there.

"I come here to realize rest and peace," she said; "and it braces me for what I have to do. I like to think of them who rest not day or night in the service of Him whom they loved, and yet can never know weariness or tiredness again. The service of love which cannot be weary, must be the perfection of life."

Evidently she was very tired; for, as she spoke, her eyes bent down upon the turf, where now a thousand dew-drops were sparkling in the eastern sunshine, which had just triumphed over the mists and fogs. He saw that her cheeks were very pale, and that on the long fringe of lashes, which rested on them, there was also dew, the dew of recent tears.

"You are doing too much," he said; "it ought not to be so."

"Oh! no; it is not too much," she answered. "I am not always so tired." She looked up at him, and there was an expression in his eyes which brought the colour back into her face, and in another minute she had drawn herself up to her full height, and said, in her natural tone—"Will you come home to breakfast? it is just nine o'clock."

"I ordered it at the hotel, thanks," he said; "so I suppose we must part here."

Something like a shadow came into her dim eyes; but it passed away.

"Good-bye," she said; "I will see that Rosie is at the coach office by ten o'clock. Thank you for smoothing the way for me to have her for this week; it has been such a help. Good-bye."

So they parted. One going on in the path, which lay up the mountain side, ever higher and higher the ascent—so the world said; for honours and success seemed to come thick and fast on Sir Philip Dennistoun. The other—to her lowly, but appointed track, through the valley; taking up the way-side flowers of love and self-forgetfulness, and unconsciously weaving for her gentle brow a crown of unfading beauty; unconsciously to herself, too, being raised higher and higher on the wings

of faith and hope to Him whose loving-kindness is better than the life itself; who, for the meek and gentle souls, reserves a height of blessedness in the Eternal Kingdom of His Father, of which they little dream nor has it entered into their hearts to conceive.

CHAPTER X.

SIR JASPER ONCE MORE.

"O, learn to read what silent love hath writ,
To hear with eyes, belongs to love's fine wit!"
SHAKESPEARE.

ONE bright morning, early in January, Rosie Dennistoun came dancing into the drawing-room at Ecclestone Square, and rushed into Irene's arms, with all her wonted *empressement*.

"You are really come then. Isn't it delightful; and just in time for the great events which are coming off, and for the climax of the 28th, my birthday festivities, a dinner, and a dance; and heaps of people staying in the house at Rockdeane, and all kinds of fun. This drawing-room looks desolate without Cuthbert's sofa, I must say; how is he?"

"Much better," was the reply; "and in a month's time I hope he will be able to return with his mother. She is so glad to be with him again, and the change was good for Mary, who has not been very strong this winter, and, perhaps, just as well for every one."

"For you certainly, you look dreadfully pale and thin; but I daresay you will only begin to trudge about after the poor people, and wear yourself out with them. I shall not allow it, while

I am here, however. But we shall all be off to London the first week in February, I am afraid. Sir Philip Dennistoun, M.P., is anxious to take his seat, and we are all anxious to shine with borrowed lustre, as becomes his mother, sister, and brother. There has been a fuss with Jasper, of course," and Rosie's face became more serious; "he borrowed money of Frederick Tillett, and they have been going on so badly together. It came to Philip's ears, and we had an awful commotion; but I daresay Jasper will behave better now you are come; we all shall. You don't ask about the Rodham people. Lady Eugenia begins to droop a little, for, in spite of great friendship, and all the rest of it, Philip has not actually proposed to her. It is rather odd, and I don't understand it; but so it is. I don't think Philip knows his own mind."

"I should have thought no one knew it better," Irene said.

"Well, now we will talk about the twenty-eighth. I shall be nineteen, and we are going to make it an occasion for doing kindness to every one, before we go to London. What with the scarlet fever about the house, and having to go to London, every one has not been entertained as they ought to be. We are to have a succession of people staying with us, as I told you; and dinners to suit their various degrees. Mother is so great in the little distinctions now; and she has learned the whole ins and outs of Rodham, and the county, in the most wonderful way. We begin to-morrow with the first batch of people, and a dinner the day after. I want you to come for the whole time, will you?"

"Oh, no; most decidedly not," said Irene; "I have to look after Forster and the children, and there are

many things also I must attend to. I shall like to see you on your birthday; one such party will be quite enough for me."

"But you will come to dinner with Mr. Williamson on the twenty-third, and stay on after that."

"No, I think not. It is very good of you, Rosie, to invite me; but I don't feel in the least up to many of your grand doings. Perhaps I am not very strong; for it tires me even to think of it."

"Very well," said Rosie, "you shall do as you wish; but you must and shall come on the twenty-eighth. All the rooms are to be thrown open; and we are to have dancing and music, and something to please every one. All Rodham, and the county besides, are to be there on that occasion; and oh, it will all be very much like a story! Just think two years ago, when I was seventeen, how little I dreamed of such times as these. I went to a little dancing-party at a neighbour's at Kensington, in a white muslin, with some flowers in my hair that George Sandford sent me; and Philip was too tired and busy to go with us. He came home dusty and inky from his chambers, just as we were starting; and said he should have to be hard at work till two or three in the morning; but somehow"—Rosie paused. Then she went on—"Somehow, the Philip of those days was more to me than the Philip of these. It is not that he is a bit spoiled, or set up—that he could never be—but he is always so full of schemes and plans; and he often looks far more tired than in the old times."

Hilda and Randal now came running in, to claim Irene's promise of a walk, and were delighted with a drive instead, in the pretty pony carriage which was waiting for Rosie, and in which she drove

them all half-way to Rockdeane; setting them down at the first gate, and leaving them to walk home.

In spite of many attempts to change her purpose, Irene held firmly to her determination not to enter into any of the Rockdeane festivities till Rosie's birthday arrived. Her sister wrote often from Orchard Leigh, where she was fast losing a cold and cough, which had clung to her through the early part of the winter, and expressed great interest in the coming parties at Rockdeane. She was very anxious that Irene should have a new dress for the occasion, and begged her to get a suitable and pretty one. Ideas differ as to what is suitable and pretty; and Mrs. Williamson would undoubtedly have found fault with the simple and unpretending white dress which lay on the bed, on the eventful night of the twenty-eighth, waiting for Irene to put it on.

It was getting very late, and yet the dress lay untouched. Irene had helped Rosie in various little finishing touches about the rooms which servants never give; and long after she had disappeared to dress, she went hither and thither at Mrs. Dennistoun's instigation, from one end of the house to the other. She was too little accustomed to think of herself, even to remember how tired all the extra exertion would make her. And when at length she went to her room, she lay down on the sofa at the foot of the bed; and, instead of beginning to dress, she began to dream, and was unconscious of everything that was passing, till a touch on her shoulder awakened her.

"Do you know it is nearly ten, and every one is coming. Are you astonished to see me?"

The speaker was Lady Eugenia, who stood before Irene in the most becoming dress of pale blue, here and

there looped up with the faintest blush roses; some of which were also arranged in the masses of light hair which hung low over her sloping shoulders, and were fastened in their place by a diamond pin.

Irene, between sleeping and waking, could not repress the words which rose to her lips,—

"How beautiful you look."

"Do I? Well, be quick, and make yourself beautiful, too; and we will go down together. I will make myself comfortable in this chair, and wait. I wanted to see you, and talk to you, that is why I came. Oh, dear!" and with a sigh, Lady Eugenia threw herself back in the chair, and went on—"Why don't you ring for a maid; that child Rosie must be dressed by this time."

"I am accustomed to dress myself, thanks."

"Not your hair?"

"Yes, my hair; and I dislike to have it touched by other people."

"How odd! I should die of the trouble, if I had to touch mine myself."

"But you and I are different."

"I know that; you are not only different to me, but to all the world beside. Do you remember that day long ago when I met you in an old broken-down vehicle, in the autumn twilight? As you turned your face towards me then, I took a liking to it; and I never see it but I feel the same liking. I had no idea that the man who was whipping up the grey pony was Sir Philip. I read it differently—I thought he was a friend, something more to you than a friend, perhaps, who had come from your old home in Devonshire to see you, and had taken you and that boy a drive. I made a story out of it. You looked so happy, and just then I was miserable; I felt ill, and weak, and

stupid, as if life had nothing in it worth living for—wishing the end would come. But since then it has been changed, and now it has come to a stop again; I feel the old blank creeping back. I shall get the blues again, and fall into ill-health, as they say. Irene, I wonder what it is that makes you look so serene and happy? It is a mystery; because you have not, I suppose, everything to make you so, as Aunt Catharine is always saying I have. What is it?"

The answer to the question did not come, for there was a tap at the door, and Lady Eugenia's maid appeared.

"I came to tell your ladyship that a great many people have arrived, and Mrs. Dennistoun has sent for Miss Dennistoun. All the ladies are gone down; had not your ladyship better go too?"

"I shall not hurry myself. Look here, Elstone, finish dressing Miss Clifford, and I will watch the operation."

"This dress?" inquired Elstone, significantly, as she touched the white heap on the bed; "and what ornaments?"

"Those white camellias, please, for my hair; and if you will put them in for me I shall be very glad."

The voice was irresistible. Elstone melted. She put on the white silk skirt, and then arranged the tunic and body of white tulle, with her professional fingers, looping up the tunic with sprays of fern and camellia buds, and putting some in Irene's hair.

"Any ornaments?" she asked again; but more graciously this time.

"Yes; I have a string of pearls, on some black velvet, for the throat and wrists."

"Old-fashioned" was almost on Elstone's lips, but she took the little necklet in her hand, and tied it in its place.

"She wants no ornaments," said Lady Eugenia, "except those she always has;" and, with an impulse she could not resist, she bent over Irene, and kissed her, saying, "What are those words about the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which are of great price? Come, put on your gloves, and let us go down."

The wide staircase and hall were brilliantly lighted, and flowers in stands, and flowers in pots, were massed together on all sides, and perfumed the air with their fragrance. As the guests entered, from the cold, raw, January night, it seemed like stepping into fairyland. Rosie stood by her mother and Sir Philip at the door of the first room, receiving every one with graceful courtesy; and, as Lady Eugenia and Irene passed in, Sir Philip's eye rested on them. What a contrast they were; and who, in all that crowd, could look at Irene a second time by the side of her companion? A little bantering talk passed between Lady Eugenia and Sir Philip; and then other guests arrived, and she moved on.

Irene stayed by Rosie; and, as Sir Philip was exchanging a few pleasant words with a stout lady, who was one of the many Rodham people who were flattered by the invitation, Irene saw old Forrest touch Sir Philip's arm. She heard the words, "In the study, Sir Philip," and saw that a card was put into his hand. She saw, too, that, as he looked at it, a bewildered, puzzled expression passed over his face. He turned to Mrs. Dennistoun, and saying, "I will return directly," followed old Forrest to his own room, in the other wing of Rockdeane.

The wax candles at his writing-table were lighted; but, after the brightness and splendour of the other part of the house, the room looked dark and dismal. When

Sir Philip entered it, standing by the chimney-piece, and leaning against it, as if for support, was a young man, with a pale, haggard face, and weak eyes, who was nervously twitching at the wide-brimmed felt hat he held in his hand; and whose voice, with a strong colonial twang, jarred unpleasantly on Sir Philip's ear, as he said:

"I went to the lawyer's first; but I heard he was here; so I came on at once. It is not a very pleasant errand for me, nor for you neither."

"Sit down," said Sir Philip, with his accustomed courtesy, and never failing pity for anything weak and and feeble; "sit down. I see on this card, my servant has brought me, a name which I do not know: Sir Jasper Cleveland Dennistoun. Surely there is some mistake."

"There is no mistake; I am Sir Jasper Dennistoun's grandson. I can't help it. Of course it will be very disagreeable for you, and you no end of a swell, and all these grand folks here; but it's no mistake."

"That will appear hereafter," said Sir Philip, proudly; "do I understand that you present yourself here as heir to the estates and title of the late Sir Jasper Dennistoun? Such a claim as that must be substantiated."

"There will be no trouble about it;" and the boy, for he was scarcely more, took from his breast-pocket a black leather case.

"The whole story is in here," he said. "The copy of the marriage certificate, and of the registers of my father's birth and baptism. My old grandmother had a temper; and so my grandfather soon grew tired of his bargain. He refused to bring her here to this place, Rockdeane, as his wife, though his wife she was. His mother, so they say, was as proud as a peacock; and there was an awful row

when her daughter-in-law tried to force herself in here once. On condition of a regular allowance, and a handsome sum to start with, she went out to New Zealand, and there she died some months ago. She and I were both down with the fever, when the news of old Sir Jasper's death came, and the legacy of 10,000*l.* was paid into the Bank by the lawyer. Nobody knew which of us would go first; but the old lady died, and I lived. It might have been better if it had been the other way, especially for you."

There was a want of refinement and taste about the boy, which grated on Sir Philip's feelings most terribly; but at the same time, every moment seemed to strengthen his faith in the truth of his statement.

"I was carried into my grandmother's room, and laid down by her side on her bed. She took from under her pillow this case, and charged me to start for England as soon as I could wind up the affairs of the farm, and come direct to Rockdeane. She made me swear I would, and she told me that my father had never known his father was an English baronet, till he too lay dying. Then she told him the truth, and promised to see me righted. There was a duplicate of these papers in the old man's possession. Of course you have seen them?"

"Do you suppose it is possible?" said Sir Philip, with dignity. "Do you suppose that if I had seen them, I should have taken possession here? But, as I told you, the whole story shall be submitted to my lawyers; search shall be instituted for the duplicate of these documents, at which I cannot look now; and if things are as you say—"

"You needn't doubt me, sir," said the youth, a touch of honesty of purpose kindling in his plain sallow face; "I never told a lie yet, and I never will. I should have

been much happier if I had stayed in New Zealand. I have been brought up at New Cross farm, and seen it grow to what it is; it was a deal more to my taste than this place would be. It is too big and grand; I shall never do for life here."

"Well," Sir Philip said, touched by the boy's manner, in spite of the voice and face, which were alike unattractive, "as you see, my house is full of guests to-night. I am giving an entertainment on a large scale, as an acknowledgment of much hospitality and kindness which has been shown me in this neighbourhood. I will, if you please, order refreshments to be brought for you here, in this room; and I will try to communicate with Mr. Williamson, and send him to you, if I can do so unnoticed. It is impossible for me to stay any longer now; but I hope you will rest, and take necessary refreshment before you return to Rodham."

Something of the greatness of Sir Philip's soul seemed to penetrate the boy, as he looked up at him from the depths of the comfortable chair, into which he had sunk. Those wonderful eyes, about which Mrs. Henderson had spoken, seemed to read him through and through. He almost quailed under their glance; and yet, in the answering look which he gave back, there was fully as much admiration as fear. He had expected something so different—anger and a fierce determination to resist his claim, contempt and contumely. Instead of these, he met dignified kindness and forbearance; and if there was doubt as to the validity of his claim, as it was only natural there should be, it was scarcely expressed at all, and certainly in no way which could hurt or offend him.

"I am sorry enough," he faltered; "but it is all true; I wish it wasn't. For, of course, every one will sneer and

scoff at me here. My grandmother was the daughter of poor but respectable people; and though there is a great deal to be said to her honour, of course that will be cast up against me amongst all these great folks. My own mother I can't remember; my father never cared much about me. And I have no friends; not a soul who really cares whether I live or die. I swore solemnly to the dead to come here and assert my claim, and I was bound to do it; but—"

He covered his face with his hands, and Sir Philip could see that he was trembling in every limb. He laid his hand kindly on his shoulders, and said,—

"We must both nerve ourselves to act like men; and may God defend the right."

Then he left the room; and catching sight of a servant, sent him to call Forrest. Old Forrest came, his face full of inquiry and eagerness,—

"Forrest, will you see that the gentleman in my study has some wine and cold meat sent in to him. He has travelled a long distance, and has only recently recovered from an illness. Let him be attended to, and make up the fire there, and light some more candles."

"Yes, Sir Philip," said the old man, "certainly;" and then he waited, as if he expected more.

But Sir Philip passed on; and Forrest wondered—"There is something amiss, there is something wrong; but, lor! how calm he is. Well, I would very near be ready to go through fire and water for him, that I would."

Sir Philip went back into the gay crowd, where he was anxiously expected by Mrs. Dennistoun and Rosie.

"Where have you been, Philip? Do you know how late it is; and dancing ought to have begun? But you know you were to dance the first quadrille with Lady

Eugenia. Lord Scarstone, too, is come, and Mr. Bellfield. Pray, do look after them. Philip, really you take it very easily; and you know so many people are here who will be ready to catch at little deficiencies, and be offended."

"I will do my duty now," Sir Philip said. "Jasper"—and the very name recalled the other Jasper, who was at that moment in his study—"Jasper, tell the bandmaster we are ready. Come, do your duty; and see that the young ladies have partners." Then, in another minute, he had led Lady Eugenia to her place, and was for the rest of the evening perfect as a host, and delighting every one with his genial courtesy and kindness. No one was forgotten; yet no one felt themselves under the pressure of forced attentions. "It is passing away from me," he was saying to himself; "they may as well carry away a good impression of it all. There is no one to suffer personally; that is the great comfort. Rosie will be well taken care of; this life has been bad for Jasper; and his mother will soon recover from the disappointment. If there had been one nearer to me to whom I must have told this, and had known that there would have been humiliation and distress, for my sake, it would have been very hard." And as these thoughts passed through his mind his eye caught a wistful, earnest glance from Irene.

She was enjoying herself in her own way: talking to those people who seemed shy and solitary, and watching every one with interest and pleasure. It was nothing to her that Margaret Thornycroft assured her the theatrical party at Scarstone Court had been more brilliant; and the rooms were really magnificent there. Nothing to her that Mrs. Tillett talked, behind her, to one of her

allies, as she sat on the same ottoman, of Lady Eugenia Le Marchant as Helen's most intimate friend; that, although Helen was in her confidence, she really could not say how matters stood between her and Sir Philip; that the Bishop and Lady Catharine had dined at Rockdeane, on the previous night, but had not stayed, as dear Lady Catharine was so good and conscientious she did not quite like balls for Bishops' wives; then, really, what a number of people there were in the room, of whom she had not the slightest notion who they were—Rodham people, most likely.

And at that moment Sir Philip came up to the ottoman; and Mrs. Tillett, expecting he was coming to speak to her, stopped short in her conversation, and leaned over Irene —whose presence she entirely ignored—with a bland smile. Great was her surprise when Sir Philip seemed as entirely oblivious of her as she had been of Irene; only his was perfectly unaffected oblivion, and thus was different.

"Will you let me speak to you one moment?" he said, bending over her.

Irene rose. He gave her his arm, and they walked away together.

"Who is that?" the shy girl, to whom Irene had been talking, heard Mrs. Tillett's friend inquire.

"Oh, I believe it is Mr. Williamson's sister-in-law; a Miss Clifford, isn't it, May?"

"Of course it is, Mamma; you must surely know her."

"It is a great loss if you do not," put in another voice, Lady Eugenia's, as she took the vacant place on the ottoman. "I know her enough to make me want to know her more. She is altogether delightful."

"I thought she looked very nice," the timid questioner now ventured to affirm. And Mrs. Tillett, so great in her

own eyes—who had been doing her best to be grand and dignified—felt that she was checkmated.

This is a hollow and foolish world, with all its little miserable rivalries and envies and jealousies. Centuries ago there was the same strife going on—who should be accounted the greatest. And the same voice answers now as then. And the palm is given to those who are lowly in their own eyes, and bear about with them a panoply which the shafts of ill-nature, or silly, empty self-exaltation, are powerless to pierce. It must be confessed that we women are more prone to this weak insistance on our own rights and supposed dignities than men. But could a pretentious woman, who talks to those whom she is pleased to consider a little beneath her in the social scale, with the air of superiority about her titled acquaintances, her large dinner-parties, and her numerous retinue of servants, know how infinitely small she becomes in the effort to press her greatness on others, I think we should have less of this too prevalent weakness amongst us than we have. There are those whom we call nature's gentlewomen, who, by an innate refinement, are preserved from falling into this grievous offence against good breeding; but I think the very best code of manners is to be learned only in that school where grace is given to follow the very highest example that the world ever saw—even His, who in the fullness of a love which knew no boundary, but was alike for rich and poor, humbled Himself from a Throne of Infinite Glory to veil that glory in our likeness, and to live a life in which no self-exaltation or self-pleasing ever found entrance.

"I want to find a quiet corner," Sir Philip said, as he and Irene moved away, "to ask you a question. Have

you missed your brother, Mr. Williamson, from the room?"

"Yes," Irene said. "Is anything wrong with him? I have been wondering where he was."

"He is all right," Sir Philip said. "I hope I did not make you think otherwise; but he has been entertaining a strange and unbidden guest in my study. What would you say if you heard that this house, with all the lands and money, had slipped away from me, and that I was no longer Sir Philip Dennistoun, but plain Philip Dennistoun, of the Temple—once more?"

The colour rushed to her face, and a strange light came in her eyes, as she answered,—

"I should be sorry for you, if you cared very much; but——"

"Sorry!" he exclaimed. "Do you take in what it would entail? I must give up place and influence; I must be food for hungry gossips for at least nine days; I must be discussed in all my bearings! Nay, there may be some that will say I have had a suspicion of the truth all the time, and have kept it back. For Sir Jasper Cleveland Dennistoun says there are duplicate copies of the documents he has brought here to-night, in this house. If they are found, the whole thing will be as clear as day, and there will be no need of a great Dennistoun case. If the documents are not forthcoming, we shall have to pause; but my own impression is that there is no doubt the boy's story is true,—he is little more than a boy. He is fresh from New Zealand, and looks like a colonist; and, far more, *speaks* like one; but I believe he is honest."

"Did you say from New Zealand?" Irene asked, with sudden earnestness.

"Yes. Does that give you any clue? What can you know about it?"

"I know nothing; but some time ago Mrs. Bolton, the chaplain's wife at the Almshouses, showed me an entry in her son's diary, who died at Canterbury, which she thought referred to some one of the name of Dennistoun."

"And you never told anyone?"

"No, certainly not!" she answered, emphatically.

He looked down at her with a curious expression of mingled admiration and amusement.

"So like you!" he said; "you are not one to cater for gossip. Well, let me give you some supper, and then I must go off on my round again. You are the only soul in this house to whom I have confided my secret. I tell you, that you may talk to your brother about it; I need not add, to no one else—words thrown away, as far as you are concerned. I must leave you now;" for Jasper touched his sleeve,—

"Philip, old Lady Scarstone is going. Pray come, and see her to the carriage. I think she is huffy because you were not at the door when they came in."

"You little ready-made man of the world!" was the answer. "Don't be fussy, my boy. Old Lady Scarstone is not likely to take wings, or vanish into thin air."

"How amusing Sir Philip is!" exclaimed Margaret Thornycroft, who had just been deposited at the table by Irene's side; "you seem as confidential with him as ever, Miss Clifford. Lady Eugenia will be jealous."

Irene had a quiet way of ignoring ill-bred speeches like these, which was infinitely provoking to young women of Margaret Thornycroft's type.

"What a lovely fern that is!" she said, "just opposite us."

Margaret Thornycroft did not condescend to answer. She turned away to her neighbour on the other side, and was soon in her element—laughing and giggling like any schoolgirl waiting for her German class to begin. Not that Margaret Thornycroft's school-days were recent; it was a good many years since she had sat at a desk and learned her lessons. It is to be regretted that they had been learned to so little purpose.

At last it was all over; the rooms were empty and deserted. The servants had put out the lamps and the wax-lights, and had gone tired to bed; but Sir Philip Dennistoun still sat in the study at his writing-table.

The large house was silent and quiet, and the ticking of a heavy old-fashioned clock in the great hall could be distinctly heard. For how many years had it ticked its unchanging song!—"never—for ever: for ever—never!" now, just as it had done when old Sir Jasper had put his hand to the documents which had been safely preserved in the old-fashioned black leather case for so many, many years.

They were lying before Philip now, and were endorsed—"Copy of my marriage certificate," "Copy of the register in the parish church of St. Margaret's, Loughboro', of the baptism of my son, Jasper Dennistoun." Then there was a statement, written on old dark-blue paper, in the handwriting which had become familiar to Philip, by inscriptions in books, scraps of translation in Greek verse, and some few letters. It was as follows:—

"Finding it incompatible with my own happiness to live with my wife, Susan Dennistoun—she refusing to see

me at stated times, and insisting on her right to come to this house, Rockdeane, and be there acknowledged before the world as Lady Dennistoun—I have determined to part from her and the infant, my son, under the following agreement. She promises to go out to the settlement in New Zealand, and remain there until the death of my mother, or as much longer as I shall desire, calling herself Susan Cleveland, and the infant, her son, Jasper Dennistoun Cleveland. On my side, I promise to pay to the said Susan Dennistoun, under the name of Cleveland, through my family lawyer, James Balfour, the sum of three hundred pounds yearly, and a further sum of five hundred pounds to be invested by her in the purchase of land in the colony and the stocking of a farm to be raised on that land. I further agree to pay a reasonable amount for the education of my son, if he lives to need it. And further, at my death, these documents shall be produced, and my son acknowledged as my lawful heir to the estates and moneys connected with and belonging to the ancient baronetcy of which I am the representative, and to the residence, and all that it contains, known as Rockdeane, all in the outlying parish of the Cathedral City of Rodham, in the county of Cumberland. If either of the two persons concerned in the agreement break faith with the other, the provisions therein made are forfeited.

"Signed, in the presence of me,
"JAMES BALFOUR.

"JASPER PHILIP DENNISTOUN, Bart.
"SUSAN DENNISTOUN, *alias* CLEVELAND.

On the eighth day of September, anno Domini one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one."

These papers were enclosed in another, in which were written several entries, evidently made at different times. The handwriting was fine and pointed, and the spelling defective.

"Duplicates of these papers are lodged in the hands of my husband, Jasper Dennistoun.

"Married this day, May 3rd, 18—, my son Jasper Cleveland Dennistoun to Emily Barrett, daughter of Captain Barrett, R.N.

"Born May 10th, 18—, my grandson, who was baptized June 25th, Jasper Cleveland Dennistoun."

Then came the last.

"The child, Jasper, is all that is left to me; his father and his mother are both taken from me. Call me Marah. If I die before Sir J. P. D., he is to convey these papers to him, and present himself as his lawful heir.—Susan Dennistoun."

So long separated in life; in death they were not long divided. What a story lay revealed in those old time-worn papers!—a story of wrong and misdoing, of concealment, and of wilful cutting himself off from all the dearer and closer ties of life. No wonder that the man lived and died solitary; no wonder that he cared to see no one, and that few had access to him. Long and thoughtfully did Philip Dennistoun ponder over those papers, and every time he read them the more convinced he became of the certainty of his own position. He saw all that was before him; and I think he knew then, for the first time, how much he had really cared for that which, when it was his, seemed of no very great value in his eyes. The resignation of his lately won seat in the House, that power of doing good which money always brings, the business details that must be gone through, the

giving up of Rockdeane, and the house in Grosvenor Crescent; the effort which he must make to return to his work as a barrister—work which he had liked well enough, but which was, nevertheless, he knew, drudgery and lacked all the excitement and relish which had surrounded him of late. Then there was the verdict of the world to meet—that relentless and pitiless judge, which, reason as we will, we all dread. To be hidden from the strife of tongues when any great change is passing over our lives, has been the felt, if not the expressed desire of most of us. Pity and praise alike are distasteful to us, and the feeling that we are canvassed by the world, "which is all eye and ear," and "has such a stupid tongue to blare its own interpretation," has added a sharp sting to many a trouble. Well; it must all be met and faced, was Sir Philip's last thought, as he folded the papers, and put them back into their case, before locking them away securely in his desk.

Met! and how? and then the words came back which he had heard spoken by those gentle lips—"Those that *wait* shall renew their strength." And before the wintry dawn had struggled into the room through the chinks of the shutters, Philip Dennistoun had renewed his strength, and, no longer faint, was ready to pursue and to win in the fight which lay before him.

The guests at Rockdeane saw but little of their host that day. Forster Williamson arrived early, and they were closeted together till luncheon time.

"I can find nothing amongst Mr. Balfour's papers which at all bears on this matter," Mr. Williamson said; "and, unless the duplicates of those I read last night are forthcoming, that youth's claim cannot be said to be

established. I saw him at the Mitre Hotel before I came out here this morning; he looks very ill—almost as if he would not live, I think."

"He will live," Philip said; "and I hope do well. I judge him to be honest, but not over vigorous either in mental or bodily power. We can send to Loughborough, you know, and identify the baptismal and marriage registers, if they exist there."

"I have thought of that, and I mean to start myself by the night train; and I think, Sir Philip, till we have identified that part of the story, we may keep our own counsel."

"But we must try to find the duplicate of these papers. Shall we take old Forrest into confidence? I think he and Mrs. Mason must have suspicions, and old Smith also. He was very ill yesterday. He may have an idea of some secret place where the old man kept his papers. Will you go with me, and see him? I don't think he has long to live."

"I am quite at your service to-day; and from what Irene told me of Mrs. Bolton, and also of a conversation Mr. Sandford had with an innkeeper in the neighbourhood, I expect there was once a rumour afloat that Sir Jasper was married. Irene, too, mentioned the wandering of an old woman in Hildyard's Almshouses, when she was dying. She was the old sexton's second wife, and she talked on that last day of some one she called Susan, and of her falling down some precipice, and her efforts to save her. Then one of the other pensioners said something about the curious coincidence that this old Mrs. Gillett should die on the morning of Sir Jasper's funeral. But it is no use going over the ground again here."

That day was passed by Sir Philip and Mr. Williamson in gathering together all the evidence which it seemed wonderful had been hitherto withheld.

Old Smith knew it; of course he knew it, that Sir Jasper had got into a scrape, when he was not so young either; that he caught a tartar, and sent her packing. For it was said she had a temper like a demon, though a face like an angel. It was not for him to say anything; besides, he heard the son was dead out in foreign parts. It was so many years gone by, he had nothing to do with it.

Mrs. Bolton's evidence was, to Sir Philip's mind, the most conclusive. The whole story tallied so precisely with the one the youth himself told.

Then came evasive answers from Dr. Simpson, from which little could be gathered, and little as it was, it was irritating alike from its vagueness and caution.

By dinner-time that night, Philip had made up his mind that all doubt was over—he was not the rightful heir to Rockdeane; and that there was nothing left but to relinquish speedily that which he had ignorantly held for sixteen months. He listened to Mrs. Dennistoun descanting on the advantages of the house in Grosvenor Crescent; he heard Rosie talking, with girlish pleasure, of her coming introduction into the gay world, — her presentation at Court, and her rides in the park, and operas, and parties; he listened to Lady Eugenia's bright conversation, and felt like one in a dream. The time must come when he would have to dispel the illusion, and tell Rosie and Jasper and their mother that they must descend with him from all the bright and pleasant things in which they had delighted to the sober reality of the commonplace everyday life which they had shared

together, for so many years, in Codrington Villas, Kensington.

"Do not tell anyone how matters stand, till these documents are forthcoming; for, unless they are found, some time must elapse before the claimant's case can be made out."

So Mr. Williamson had said in parting that evening, before he started for Loughborough; and, resting on his advice, Philip kept silence.

Irene went back to Ecclestone Square, Lady Eugenia to Bishop's Court. The household at Rockdeane were alone for the first time for some weeks, and Philip heard them talking over the necessary preparations before going to London; and knew that, inevitably, those preparations would be very different to what they contemplated.

On the morning of the second day, Forster Williamson returned from Loughborough with the copy of the baptismal and marriage register in his hand, and was met by Philip with a smile, half sad and half triumphant. He took him into the study, where old Sir Jasper had fallen down in the attack which ended in death; and, pointing to a panel in the wall just above the place where Sir Jasper's chair had always stood, said,—

"I found that this panel opened by a spring, and my attention was drawn to it by this little mark in the oak" —pointing to a small worn spot on one side. "Look!" he said; and, pressing it inwards, a small door opened, and the secrets of the dead were revealed. A heap of yellow faded papers lay on small shelves, and Philip took a bundle from the lowest tier,—the duplicate copies of the contents of that black case in Mr. Williamson's possession, and several additional documents, which proved,

indeed, that Susan Cleveland had been his wife, and that young Jasper Cleveland Dennistoun was his heir, by direct descent.

Philip recalled the words in the Prayer-book, marked by the trembling old hand, so soon to be still for ever: "Against Thee—Thee only, have I sinned!"

CHAPTER XI.

GREAT NEWS FOR RODHAM.

"His life was gentle, and the elements
So mixed in him, that nature might stand up
And say to all the world,—
This was a Man!"

SHAKSPEARE.

AND at last Rodham rang with the news—the great news—that Rockdeane was to have another master; that the member for the Eastern Division of the county would never take his seat in the House, where such grand things had been expected of him; that he had been in possession, for sixteen months, of a title and estates to which he had no right; and that the grandson of the old Sir Jasper had appeared to claim his own. It seems needless to rehearse here all the wonder and surprise and all the remarks and gossip which followed as a matter of course. We all know, too well, how the love of talk, for talking's sake, is stirred in a town or city by a less event than this. From the good old Bishop, to the Warden of Hildyard's Almshouses—from Sir Wilton St. John, to the smallest tenant-farmer of the neighbourhood—from Mrs. Tillett, the banker's wife, to the sister of the humblest clerk in the office of the National Provincial Bank—from the magnificent tradesman who had furnished that gor-

geous funeral for the late baronet, to the small linen-draper who was proud to count Mrs. Mason amongst his regular customers, a thrill of wonder and surprise ran with electric power.

It was, indeed, so extraordinary; and how uncomfortable for Mrs. Dennistoun; and how disappointing for the pretty girl who had been so admired! They had all been so pleased with their new position, and had made it so evident, it was really most trying for them. But how strange that Sir Philip (it was difficult to call him Mr. Dennistoun) had never discovered the papers till the others had been produced from New Zealand. It was really more than extraordinary that Mr. Williamson knew nothing of them, and that they should turn up so soon after the original documents were produced. It was quite evident, too, that Sir Philip was determined to make no stand against the claim or dispute it. It showed how thoroughly convinced he was that the claimant had a strong case.

Then followed the story of the claimant himself: his low origin on one side—hardly atoned for by the ancient name he bore. Nevertheless, Rodham knew that he must be accepted, and prepared to leave an unlimited amount of cardboard at Rockdeane when the right time arrived. When would it arrive? and how soon would the Dennistouns leave Rockdeane? It must be so exceedingly unpleasant for them to remain there in a false position. Sir Philip looked very ill—so those said who had seen him—and Mrs. Dennistoun had been in Dr. Simpson's hands ever since the night of that great entertainment. What a pity it had been given; for on that very evening the blow had fallen.

And so the little world of Rodham conjectured and

apostrophised, and pitied, and deprecated, and wondered, as all the little worlds in which we cast in our lot will continue to do, in like circumstances, to the end of time.

It was with a strange feeling of the change which was at hand, that Philip Dennistoun rode at a leisurely pace through the High Street of Rodham, two days after that on which the papers had been discovered, and the copies of the registers had been brought to him by Forster Williamson. If he did not look as ill as Rodham reported he did, he looked very grave, as he stopped before the door of the Mitre, and giving his horse into the care of the ostler, who hastened to meet it, he asked of the waiter if he could see Sir Jasper Dennistoun.

"I beg your pardon, Sir Philip," was the man's puzzled answer; but the master of the hotel, with significant haste, interposed.

"Of course; No. 21. Will you please follow me, Sir Philip?"

He preceded Philip to the end of a long passage, and the door of one of the small sitting-rooms was thrown open, and Philip heard himself announced in the hotel-keeper's grandest manner.

Crouching over the fire, in an idle, despondent fashion, sat the rightful heir to the Dennistoun title and estates. He rose, when Philip went up to him, and bowed in a confused, shy way.

Philip held out his hand, and said,—

"I am afraid you are still very much of an invalid."

"Yes; I feel very ill, and miserable."

It came out with all the petulance of a child.

Philip took the big arm chair on the opposite side of the fire, and said,—

"You will have heard from Mr. Williamson that the documents are found; and the copies of the marriage and baptismal registers at Loughborough are in our possession. I have come to-day to ask what your wishes are about Rockdeane, and when you will desire to take possession there."

"I don't know; I must leave it to you to decide."

"I should have thought it was the other way," said Philip, with a smile. "You know you are now the head of the family, and the single fact that you have been called all your life, and your father before you, Cleveland instead of Dennistoun is the only possible difficulty, in a legal point of view, to your succession to the title and estates of your grandfather. I shall not raise the objection, and I don't suppose there is any one else who is likely to do it; so you are as secure in your position as you can desire. It was my intention to go to London in the first week of February, and I still propose to do so; you can then quietly take possession there. And as all the improvements and the modern furniture and decorations were paid for out of the estate, which was never mine, you need have no difficulty about it. The house in Grosvenor Crescent you may not be disposed to take just yet; it can be let. But all these business arrangements may be better carried out by my friend, Mr. Williamson. There are just two or three things which I should like to see finished: the restoration of the chapel at Hildyard's Almshouses, and provision made for a chaplain; and the building of the little church for the hamlet of Rockdeane, to provide the tenantry with what they have much needed, a church within easy reach of their homes."

"Yes, I am sure I will do it, and anything else you

wish, except give great parties and swell dinners—I shan't be fit for that; but I should like some farming to do, it will be more in my way. It is an awful thing to be alone in the world, in a strange country, and not a soul to care for me; only some to wish perhaps I had never come in the way at all. How you must hate me!"

Sir Philip had risen, and now stood by the boy's chair. What a contrast they were,—the one so puny and feeble, and undecided; the other the very personification of firm, well-knit manhood, and resolute will and strength, both of body and mind. Hate that poor boy! No; Philip Dennistoun could never hate any thing so poor and dependent; especially when any appeal was made to him for help and protection.

"Jasper Dennistoun," he said, calling him emphatically by his name, "let no unkindly thoughts rise between us. You cannot help the sin of concealment for which your grandfather is alone answerable; and he is gone before a Judge who sees not as we see. You cannot help the position in which you are placed, coming, after sixteen months' security, to dispossess me of what was never really mine. I took possession in the fullest faith of the justice of my claim; you come to show me my mistake, in obedience to the wishes of the dead, and you do well to assert yourself. Let there be no thought of antagonism or dislike between us. Why should there be? Let us be friends."

I have no words to tell how Sir Philip's overture was received. Surprise and pleasure and gratitude struggled with a sort of desolate pride and sense of isolation which, in a weak and futile way, the poor boy seemed to think it was dignified to show. But it would not do. The power of the great kingly soul, with all its generous impulses

and kindliness and self-forgetfulness, was too much for him. Jasper seized the hand outstretched to him, and said,—

"I would do anything for you. Do help me to do what is right and proper."

"I will," said Philip; "and while I live you may count on me as your friend. How old are you?"

"Not twenty yet—not till next May."

"Well, then, I advise you to enter yourself at Oxford or Cambridge, and keep your terms there. You will be more likely to fit yourself for your position than by shutting yourself up in Rockdeane."

"Perhaps I might; but I shall be so chaffed and bullied, because, you see, I know I fall short of what people might expect me to be. I have never been used to grand ways or swells and that kind of thing."

"Then try to fit yourself to take your place amongst the best, if not amongst the swells," said Philip, with a smile; "and, now, good-bye; for I have a great deal on hand, and I have many things to look after, before I turn my back finally on Rockdeane."

"Don't say finally," said poor Sir Jasper, following Philip to the door like a spaniel; "you will come there whenever you choose, and ——"

"All right," said Philip, cheerfully; and then he was soon on his horse again, and was riding at a quick pace towards Bishop's Court. He felt that this was a visit which would be expected of him; and the sooner it was got over the better.

Lady Catharine was very kind, she could never be anything else. But she was flurried and nervous; and, as Philip heard himself announced under the old style and title, he felt it must be for the last time. Lady

Eugenia came into the room just after the bell had rung for luncheon; and, as the Bishop was away with his Chaplain, there were only three at the table.

There was a constraint upon every one, which poor Lady Catharine tried to break through, by a continuous flow of small talk, and which seemed to hold Lady Eugenia spellbound.

I wonder if I can make Philip's feelings intelligible about Lady Eugenia; but they are difficult to define. That he admired her, and found her a pleasant and attractive companion in the hour of prosperity, there can be no doubt. When Irene had, as he fancied, been cold and distant in her manner, it was agreeable to resort to a woman who was never tired of entering into his schemes and plans—into his achievements, possible or impossible. All languor would vanish from Lady Eugenia's manner when he appeared; all her little petulance and half-invalid querulousness would melt away; and she would, apparently, forget herself in him and his interests. But never for a moment did she really forget herself. She saw in Philip a man who would help her upwards in the steep and somewhat difficult ascent of worldly distinction; but there was nothing deeper behind. She had felt as if every proud dream, and every grand vision of success and pre-eminence, was centred in him—Sir Philip Dennistoun, of Rockdeane—whose name would soon be known in Parliament, and who, with riches and talents, might carry all before him. As such, Eugenia Le Marchant would have been ready, had he asked her, to cast in her lot with his; but now it was a very different thing, and she did not hide it from herself. Nor was Philip surprised that, when they were left together in the drawing-room, as they had often been left on previous

occasions, Eugenia said, as if it were the most ordinary thing in the world:

"So you are going away from Rockdeane 'for good,' as the children say?"

"Yes," he said, "I am going; leaving another Sir Jasper in the place of the old one."

"Or in yours?" she said, with a smile.

"Or in mine; only the place was never mine, strictly speaking; and I was under a delusion the whole time."

"What is Sir Jasper like?" And then her lip quivered a little, as she gave the title to another, which had hitherto been Philip's.

"What is he like? Rather like my brother Jasper. He does not look much older; and is fair, with light hair, that critics might call 'sandy.' He has a twang of the colonies in his voice, and is not what you may call attractive; but I believe the boy's heart is in the right place, and I believe he is honest, which is saying something in these degenerate days."

"I wonder you have submitted so calmly to all this," she said, almost impatiently; "I do so wonder you did not assert yourself—did not resist the claim. You might have handed down a *cause célèbre* for posterity, you know."

"Scarcely; for there is no case to make out for the defendant; the whole thing is clear enough."

"And who is to take your seat in the House; or, rather, sit where you might have sat, and would not?"

"Oh! that I do not know. I have issued an address, which you may read to-morrow; but I have left all the arrangements in my lawyer's hands."

"I can't think why you should resign your seat; you ought to have kept it."

"I could not; I must now work hard again for my own living—work, as I was working when the sixteen months' grandeur interposed. Not that I dislike work, as you know."

She did know, but she made no sign; her head was bent over her work, and she was apparently engrossed with it. Then there was silence; and Philip felt there was no more to say. He had been more frequently in that room at Bishop's Court than any in the neighbourhood during the last few months; everything had become familiar to him, and, like all familiar things, was pleasanter than he knew till the moment when it was passing away for ever. He was going back into the toil and drudgery of life—out of what had been like a dream. It was like a sudden descent from a mountain top to the valley beneath; and yet something told him that, step by step, there was a nobler and better life stretched out before him than that to which he had been so lately raised, and from which he was so soon deposed.

He rose at last, and said: "May I ring for my horse to be brought round? I have to pay several other visits before dinner."

"Won't you wait, and see Aunt Catharine?" Eugenia asked, in a tone the weariness of which struck him; "perhaps she will be here in a few minutes."

But his hand was on the bell, and he did not volunteer to wait. Very soon the sound of his horse's feet was heard; and he went up to Eugenia.

"Good-bye," he said; "I have had many happy hours at Bishop's Court, for which I must thank you. If we do not meet again, I must give you that comprehensive benediction, which seems to include everything, and say, 'God bless you.'"

She did not stir or move; her hand lay quietly in his, and scarcely returned its pressure.

"Good-bye; give my love to Rosie and Mrs. Dennistoun;" and then he was gone.

She heard a delay in the Hall, where he had evidently met her Aunt, and was exchanging parting words with her. But when Lady Catharine came into the drawing-room, with her eyes full of tears, and her kindly old heart full of regret and sorrow, to pour it all out for the hundredth time to Eugenia, she was not there. She had escaped by another door to her own room, where, throwing herself upon the sofa, she gave vent to the tears which she could not repress. They were tears of disappointment; but, though, in their way, bitter, they were from no deep fountain of personal sorrow. At last she roused herself; and, ringing her bell, summoned Elstone, and told her that she was to order the horse, as she meant to ride for an hour.

"It is getting late; does your ladyship think it will be good for your cold? The days close in so early."

"Order the horse," was the peremptory answer; and, as Elstone left the room to obey her mistress, with an almost perceptible shrug of her shoulders, Eugenia began to prepare for her ride.

"I must walk, or ride, or do something, or I shall have no peace."

The very word brought the face of Irene before her; and, with it, the remembrance of that sweet, serene face, as she had seen it in the autumn twilight long before.

"I will go down into Rodham, to see how she takes it all—that is a bright thought;" and she went.

Irene was in the dining-room at Ecclestone Square

when Lady Eugenia arrived. The drawing-room was desolate and empty to her without Cuthbert; and she liked to have Hilda and Randal with her as much as possible, without any fear of harm to her sister's cherished ornaments and "best books," which did lay on the drawing-room tables.

Hilda was curled up in her father's large arm-chair by the fire, and Irene was reading to her.

"How cosy you look," Lady Eugenia said. "It is rather cold riding, and I am glad to see that splendid fire."

"Is it not much too cold for you to be out?" Irene said; "especially on horseback.

"I daresay it is; but I was bent upon having my own way, as usual. I daresay I shall be laid up; but it don't matter."

"You shall have some tea," Irene said. "Hilda, dear, run and tell Smith to bring us two good cups; and you may go and play in the nursery now."

As she was speaking, Randal rushed in,—

"Auntie, look; Sir Philip has given me this as a parting present; do look. He is gone away now with papa, but he has been in the study some time, and I met him coming out. And he took this from his pocket, and said he meant it for me. Just the very thing I wished for; and it was his watch when he was at school and college. Then Jasper had it; but now he has a grand gold one, with a chain, so Sir Philip took this again. Is it not beautiful? and the chain, too, and a pencil and a seal."

The boy ran away with his treasure, to display it to the servants' admiring eyes; and little Hilda followed.

"Have you taken your leave of Sir Philip Dennistoun?" Eugenia asked, when they were alone.

"Yes; he came in with Forster, just before you did, and bid Hilda and me good-bye."

"Hilda and you!" said Eugenia. But Irene did not heed the sarcastic tone. "What do you think of it all —of this descent from heights to depths!"

"I am not sure that it is a descent," said Irene. "The loss of a title and lands and money does not necessarily bring humiliation."

"How odd you are; and forgive me, if I say that it is all a fallacy. It sounds fine and unworld-like, I know; but it is not common sense."

Irene's peculiar smile rippled over her face. "No one," she said, "can look at Mr. Dennistoun, and think of a descent from any height. He looks far more like one who has gained something he had aspired to than he has done for some months."

"Then I suppose you profess to be glad that this boy, with hair that critics might call sandy, as Mr. Dennistoun says, has turned up, or rather been washed ashore across seas. I profess no such satisfaction, for I think it would have been an immense gain to the world at large if the ship that brought this boy had been engulfed in the ocean, or locked in icebergs, or any other fate you may prefer, provided this boy had shared it. Am I not hateful this afternoon?"

"Here is your tea," said Irene; "shall I put plenty of sugar in it?"

"To sweeten me, you mean. Yes; six lumps, if you like. But I must make haste and drink it, or I shall have Aunt Catharine frantic, thinking I have caught pleurisy, or congestion of the lungs, or bronchitis."

Then Eugenia drank her tea, and, drawing on her gloves, said she must go.

"Irene, I shall not see you again, perhaps, for a long time, as we are going to London next week. Don't forget me, and let me write to you sometimes; good-bye."

With sudden earnestness, she caught Irene's little slight figure in her arms, and kissed her again and again.

"Peace! yes, it is always peace with you. Irene, I wish I were like you; good-bye." And that was the end.

Irene watched the tall graceful figure ride away; and as Eugenia left the square, she turned round and waved her hand, in token of farewell; then turning back into the hall, in the wintry twilight, Irene sent up a little winged messenger for one who had so many gifts, and so much attraction of mind and person, and yet missed the true source of the peace she craved, and the rest she longed for, and so, in spite of all the world could give her, went wearily on her way.

Philip Dennistoun had a week of anxious deliberation and continual effort to smooth the way for those who undoubtedly felt the impending change more than he did. On the afternoon but one before their departure from Rockdeane, Rosie was perched upon the arm of his chair in the study, and talking to him in her old caressing way. A letter which she had brought for her brother to read and approve, was now fastened down, and put with a smile on the pile which was waiting to be sent down to the post. The address was, "George Crofton Sandford, Esq., Stow, near Bruton, Somerset," and contained an answer to one which had been received that morning.

"So your fortune is made, little Rosie," he said; "and you will soon be mistress of old Stow."

"Yes; and isn't that a nice letter of his, Philip? When I think how he was snubbed, and mother demurred, and how I was so silly as to think I should like a season in London first, I can't say how I admire him and respect him and——" She stopped, and laid her head on her brother's shoulder. "Philip, I told you once last autumn I knew what true love meant, and the difference between summer and winter birds; and *who* I knew would be true always, and could not change."

"I remember. Some day, I may test the truth of what you said, little Rosie; but not yet. Now, do you remember who is coming to dinner?"

"Oh, yes; and I hate it. What are we to say to him? And how awful it will be!"

"We must try and put him at his ease, poor boy! and Mr. Williamson is coming to help us. I wish to show we are on perfectly friendly terms with each other, and I hope your mother will understand this."

"Will you let Jasper go on at Eton?"

"No; decidedly not," was the answer. "The only favour I shall take from Sir Jasper's hand is the finishing of the Church and the work at the Almshouses. Distinctly understand that! There is a very good grammar-school near Stow to which Jasper can go every day, if Sandford really intends to carry out his plan of letting your mother have the small house on the grounds which he proposes. To send Jasper to Eton would only be to foster his notions of pride, and to make him think he was to maintain the position which he held lately as my heir. And you will be the Lady of the Manor, little Rosie, and brighten the lives of the old people. They have always lived in a corner of Stow, and they won't disturb you. You are certain to be perfection in their eyes: if you

belong to George, you must needs be superior to every one else."

"It seems all so wonderful and strange," Rosie said. "I expect we shall all lead very humdrum lives after this. Everything has been crowded into a few months. Now I must go and see mamma. Philip, I am sorry for mamma; she feels this change more than any of us." And as she spoke, there was a tap at the study door, and Mrs. Dennistoun came in.

"Run away, Rosie; I want to talk to your brother alone."

Mrs. Dennistoun took the chair Philip offered her, and said—

"I won't detain you long, Philip; but I do want to ask you if you have quite decided about Jasper, for this young man is willing to continue him at Eton."

"My mind is made up," Philip said, interrupting her. "I believe Jasper will do far better at a lower school than Eton. If I thought it were for his advantage, I might pause, and consider my decision; but I am sure I am right."

"Jasper can never be fit to rough it in a common school," his mother pleaded.

"There is no need that he should do so. This house Sandford offers you will place you near the Grammar School at Bruton, than which there is not a better in the kingdom. Jasper can learn as much there as is needful, and be under your own eye."

"We shall be buried in the country," said poor Mrs. Dennistoun; "buried alive. Kensington is better than that."

"It cannot be Kensington again," said Philip. "I shall live in chambers mostly, except when I come to see you; and then, as time goes on, I shall be able to feel my

way. I have lost ground to make up, and life, as it were, to begin again."

"You are sure to take a lead on the Circuit."

"I am not sure that I shall go on Circuit. Perhaps get a law appointment, or some office, which will fix me permanently in the neighbourhood of London."

"It is a most unfortunate affair," said Mrs. Dennistoun; "and to see a young man like this, uneducated and second rate, in your place, is really *too* much!"

"Don't say *my* place," said Philip, in the wearied manner which he could not help when listening to Mrs. Dennistoun's lamentations; "it was not my place. But, please, do not let us go over the ground again; it is so useless. I think it is a very good thing Rosie's future is so happily settled; and if any proof were needed of Sandford's disinterested love, his conduct just now is more than sufficient."

"Yes. Still, Rosie's taste is unaccountable to me; but, of course, I am thankful she should have a comfortable home. Jasper is my heaviest anxiety."

"He will do very well," Philip said, taking his hat. "I think I shall take a twilight stroll before dinner. You know Mr. Williamson is coming up with Jasper Dennistoun?"

"Yes; and I perfectly dread it."

"You need not; the poor fellow dreads it more than we can possibly do, I am very sure. We must, as I have been saying to Rosie, try to make him feel less shy and awkward. And do give your Jasper a hint to that effect."

"Jasper is always gentlemanlike," said his mother, rising instantly in the boy's defence. "His conduct to his inferiors is——"

Philip could wait to hear no more, but strode out of the house, and was soon walking at a rapid pace over the moor, taking his accustomed remedy for care and anxiety in the exercise in the open air in which his strong, vigorous frame delighted. He went over the little bridge which spanned the ravine; the same which Rosie and Irene and he and George Sandford had crossed that bright May morning. He recalled it all, and the schemes and hopes which were perhaps then at their height; for, with Philip's manliness and breadth of soul, there were in him some almost womanly touches of fidelity to the past, and a power to reproduce minute details, which is not often the case with men. Still further back he went, to that other day when he had climbed the steep face of the scar, and rescued the slight clinging form which had held on so bravely for the sake of the child who was saved by her calmness and presence of mind. He seemed to hear her voice again, and seemed to see her pale face, as she sank down on the grass and heather, and realized, for the first time, how great the peril and how great the deliverance had been. Philip walked on, and, passing Smith's house, saw a light was in the window of the room which the sick man occupied. He unfastened the little iron gate, and went up to the door; it was opened immediately by Mrs. Smith.

"I saw you coming, and I couldn't help meeting you, that I couldn't. Smith is going fast; he gets weaker every day; and he is like a lamb, which I take to be a bad sign. Come up and see him, Sir Philip; for, there, if you kill me for it, I must call you Sir Philip. You were born to be master here; and——"

"It seems that is exactly what I was *not* born to be, Mrs. Smith. But let me come up and see your poor

husband. I heard to-day, from Mr. Farrant, that he was much worse."

Mrs. Smith dragged her leviathan weight upstairs, under which the staircase groaned, and entered the room before Philip, and he followed her to the old man's bed. All that was lion-like and irritable had truly passed away; and a faint voice greeted Philip with,—

"Glad to see you, Sir Philip. I've known this a long time; but, there, it wasn't for me to tell it. The old gentleman made me swear to keep his secret, and I kept it. It was a shamefaced sort of pride that got hold of him; and Susan Cleveland, she was a temper."

"Yes, yes," said Philip; "you have told me this before. Let us leave the dead to Him who judgeth right."

"Ah, yes! ah, yes! I'm going fast, and she'll be glad to be quit of me."

"Don't talk like that, Smith; you know I shan't;" and Mrs. Smith's tears burst forth.

The old man stretched out his hand feebly to his wife, who was many years his junior, and said,

"Don't fret, Mary; don't fret; I have got a hope that we shall meet again. Do you know, Sir, that the young lady who was at the grand house in May first told me of a cure for all my pains and aches. God bless her! God bless her! She told me of the Blessed One who bore in patience for our sakes. Why, I never knew anything about Him till then. I hope I shall live to see her again. She is one of ten thousand, Sir."

"Has she—has Miss Clifford been here often?"

"Well, you see, at that time when she was at Rockdeane, she heard I wanted to see her and Miss Rosie one day. It was more for contrariness, to put out Mary. I

was always going against every one, and her in particular. And though she didn't come up then, she came up soon after; and as there was no one here to catch the scarlet fever, we weren't afraid—why should we be? There, I shall never forget her sitting down in that chair, and talking so prettily; not preaching at me, and telling me I wasn't to grumble, and I had many mercies, and all that sort of thing. No, no; she just began telling me of her little crippled nephew, and how happy he was; and then she said, 'I will repeat you a bit of poetry he likes.' She seemed to know I liked poetry, and she was right; but this was about the Blessed One, and His suffering, and His glory. Why, it was better than ten sermons to hear her, bless her. God bless her!"

And Philip's heart echoed the words, as he walked towards Rockdeane.

And did not blessing follow Irene everywhere? Was not her life, like the incense of a violet in spring's soft days, the fragrance drawn out by the sun of love and righteousness, as the scent of the hidden flower comes to us unawares from shady hedgerows, when the sunbeams of April draw it upwards, in silent thanksgiving and praise?

The dressing-bells were ringing when Philip passed under the old eagle, and went to his room.

Forrest met him.

"Mr. Williamson and the gentleman are come, Sir Philip. They are in the drawing-room."

The old man put great stress on the "gentleman" and "Sir Philip."

"You are determined not to let the old order of things pass till I am actually gone, Forrest. But please be careful to treat Sir Jasper Dennistoun respectfully, and

show by your manner that you acknowledge his position here. You have served me well for sixteen months; let me know that you serve this friendless boy in like manner. Remember, Forrest, he is wholly guiltless of the past."

"I would do anything you desire, Sir," said poor Forrest; "but Mrs. Mason and I are thinking of resigning here, Sir; we can't reconcile ourselves to the change."

"Nonsense, Forrest; you will stay in the old place, and I shall see you here when I pay it a visit. Now, I must make haste, or I shall keep dinner waiting."

Poor Jasper Dennistoun was standing awkwardly on the hearthrug, when Philip went into the drawing-room. Mrs. Dennistoun, in evening dress, which was just a little too *prononcé*, looking handsome and self-possessed, was lying back in an arm-chair, a little gypsy table by her side, on which was a roll of the embroidery she was generally employed upon—with what result, the adornments of the small drawing-room in the way of cushions and ottomans could testify. Rosie was turning over a photograph book, and trying to talk to Mr. Williamson, while Jasper the younger was rattling the balls of a small bagatelle board, which stood in a corner by the fireplace, and had been a Christmas present from Philip, to promote peace of an evening at Rockdeane. Philip's entrance seemed to rouse Sir Jasper from the hopeless shyness and depression which had rendered it impossible for him to do more than jerk out monosyllables to Mrs. Dennistoun's questions. Forster Williamson had thought it more charitable to leave him alone, and it was curious to see how he seemed to catch at Philip's hand, as it was

outstretched in kindly greeting, as a drowning man would for rescue.

Had Philip been anything but what he was, had he been anything but true and real, the circumstances in which he was now placed with the rightful heir of the title and estates would have shown the alloy mixed with the pure metal. But he only seemed to shine more brightly, and instead of indulging in self pity, or letting his superiority to poor Jasper be seen, he forgot himself in him; and the boy's shy awkward shuffling manner began to vanish under the influence which was brought to bear upon him. It was a frightful ordeal to Sir Jasper to take Mrs. Dennistoun in to dinner, and the few words she addressed to him in the way to the dining-room only met with a low grunt, as an acknowledgment. The sight of the pretty table, the sparkling glass and shining silver, the servants' quiet waiting, filled Jasper with astonishment, and he looked about him so much that he had scarcely taken two spoonfuls of soup before he found every one else had finished theirs; and then he set himself to despatch what was left, so hastily, that his usually pale face became red with the effort. Philip diverted attention from him, and drew Mr. Williamson out to tell some amusing story, and then, directly addressing Sir Jasper, he led the conversation to matters in which he knew he was interested.

When Rosie and her mother left the dining-room, Jasper lingered; but after the glass of port wine, which he always expected, Philip asked him to go and try over a duet with Rosie, and give them the benefit of it when they came to the drawing-room. Jasper hesitated; but a look at his brother's face was sufficient to assure him he meant what he said. When he was left alone with Sir

Jasper and Mr. Williamson, Philip began to talk over all the affairs more immediately connected with Rockdeane, mentioned several of the tenantry by name, and asked for the widow of one that she might be allowed to continue in the farm, free of rent, for the next year, till her eldest son was able to take the management of it. He seemed to forget nothing; and poor old Smith and his wife were especially commended to the new comer.

"I have asked all the principal tenants, who are within reach, to come up here this evening. They are to have a supper in the servants' hall, and I should like to introduce you personally to them, with a few words of explanation."

"Oh! no; pray don't. I really can't; I ——"

"If I can, I think you can. We will go into the drawing-room for a little music first, to fortify ourselves for the occasion."

"You must pluck up," Philip continued, in his hearty kindly way, "and not show the white feather. You have got a grand helper and supporter in my friend here, and you must make the most of him."

The bell rang for prayers in the little chapel at ten o'clock; and Philip led the way there, and himself conducted a short service. The psalms for the evening were read, and then followed some collects, and the lessons for the 30th of January, the anniversary of the Martyrdom of Charles, the master for whom Sir Philip Dennistoun, Knight, had shed his blood at Edgehill.

There was something soothing to Philip to commemorate in some way that day of darkness and gloom, which had so affected many who had worshipped in that little chapel in days of old, when that tale of wrong-

doing and bloodshed was yet fresh, and had vibrated through countless loyal hearts, and thrilled them with pain and distress, such as we can scarcely imagine.

The little chapel had been neatly fitted up for this short daily prayer, and the organ which Philip had told Irene he intended to place there, had arrived. But it was not put up in its place, as there had been some delay in the appearance of the man from London, who was to superintend it. When the servants were gone, Philip pointed it out to Jasper, and asked him if he cared for music; if so, he said, he hoped he would let the erection of the organ be completed. The same answer came, "If you wish it."

Then, as by previous arrangement with Forrest and Mrs. Mason, Philip led the way to the servants' hall. There some ten or twelve of the tenantry were gathered; beside the staff of household servants, which was now very large. Philip walked into the centre of the hall, and said:—

"My friends,—I wished to say a few words to you before I leave you, to express my thanks for all the kindliness you have shown me since I have been here; and to bid you good-bye. I also wish to introduce to you the grandson of the late Sir Jasper Dennistoun; and to assure you that his right here is undoubted; and that no question need arise in your mind as to that part of the matter. I hope you will receive him as you received me; and all prove to him what you have proved to me. You cannot please me better than by giving Sir Jasper Dennistoun a kindly welcome, and by serving him well."

The clear, sonorous voice rang through the hall; and, when Philip paused, there was silence. Then an old man stepped forward; he was the oldest servant present:

"We can't give you a cheer, Sir Philip, for what you say; our hearts are too heavy; but we'll do our best; and that young gentleman shall never see cause to complain—leastways, we hope not. And, Sir Jasper, you'll forgive my saying that, if you be to us what Sir Philip has been, we'll serve you heart and soul for your own sake, as well as his; and so, Sir Jasper, though we are well-nigh broken down—leastways, I am—to part from Sir Philip, right is right; and we know it. So you may hold up your head amongst us, Sir Jasper; and not be ashamed of nothing—you've no cause; and you have got an honourable name handed down to you, Sir Jasper; and none have borne it better than him that's going from us. It's right and just he should go, and we know it; but it don't make it the easier to part. God bless him wherever he goes!"

The speaker was a fine specimen of the class to which he belonged; and his speech, delivered slowly, with the broadest Cumberland accent, moved the hearts of his hearers more than any finer eloquence could have done.

Even Philip could trust himself to say no more; but he wrung the old man's hand with an earnest grasp, and the rest clustered round for the same parting honour. Sir Jasper stood by, unable to bring out a word; and, when Philip turned to leave the Hall, kept close to him, as if for protection. At the door, which Forrest held respectfully for his late master to pass, Philip paused, turned round on them all, and waved his hand, saying, "Good night; and may God bless you!"

When he was gone, the silent group found words.

"I never see him look like that but once; and that was when he made that speech to the people after his

election," said one. "It is grand, I call it, to look at him."

"And that poor whipper-snapper, with his sandy hair and his sickly face, to take his place and step in his shoes! Well, there be some that have said Susan Cleveland was never the old gentleman's lawful wife."

"I won't hear a word of it," broke in the veteran, who had spoken to Philip; "have we not *his* word for it? and what more do we want? Do you suppose *he* would deceive us?"

"Lor, no; especially as it would be to his advantage if Susan Cleveland never had been my lady," said another.

"Stop this," said the old man; "you won't mend matters by talking like this. I believe our late dear master would never have stopped to think of what *he* wanted. 'Just and right,' is his motto; and he knows this is just and right, and we must trust him. We will drink his health, by your leave, Mr. Forrest; and then the poor young Sir Jasper's; he looks as if he wanted it. I don't think he is long for this world, with a title or without it."

And so the evening closed; and in another month Rockdeane was silent and deserted. The nucleus of action was in the servants' hall, where Mrs. Mason and old Forrest still held rule over a diminished staff. The tide of life seemed to have ebbed again; and the young Sir Jasper sat in a corner of the great house, lonely and dejected, suffering from the effects of an illness which the chill English spring, in an exposed situation, did not tend to overcome.

Dr. Simpson, bland and smiling, called; and urged his advice in the most friendly terms. Forster William-

son looked him up from time to time; and the young stirring bailiff managed the affairs of the estate under his direction; while the head himself was but a cypher. In due course cards were left at Rockdeane; but they lay in a pile, almost unnoticed. Sir Jasper was very much out of health, Dr. Simpson said; but he was an interesting young man, and he had no doubt, when he felt able, would emerge from his privacy, and do the position, in which he found himself placed, due honour. But Dr. Simpson's prophecy seemed long in fulfilment; and Rodham began to give up the new Baronet as hopeless, and to turn its attention to other topics. The keen interest which the Dennistoun case had excited began to die out; and the building of the little Church, and the restoration of Hildyard's Almshouse Chapel, seemed to be the only signs which Sir Jasper gave of his existence.

CHAPTER XII.

FLOWERS OF LOVE AND PEACE.

"THEN, in that time and place I spoke to her,
Requiring, though I knew it was mine own,
Yet for the pleasure that I took to hear;
Requiring at her hand the greatest gift—
A woman's heart—the heart of her I loved."
"THE GARDENER'S DAUGHTER."

IT was a still autumn afternoon when Irene Clifford turned out of the Warden's house, and crossed the court-yard to the door of the chapel. The restorations there were nearly finished, and the designs which Philip had approved had been faithfully carried out. A tessellated pavement had taken the place of the white stone; all the pillars were scraped and polished, and the beautiful tracery of the windows restored; while the cracked, dingy glass was replaced by coloured designs from the life of our Lord. The east end was pretty and appropriate; and the polished oak seats for the poor pensioners had each a crimson baize footstool, and desk for books. A large-printed Bible and Prayer-book lay before each seat. The tomb of Sir Philip and Editha had been carefully restored and cleaned; and it was no longer difficult to read the inscription. In the vestibule, the same care had been displayed, and the whole was now perfect of its kind.

Irene waited till old Matthew Gillett came into the vestibule, to ring the bell, at ten minutes to six, for evening prayer; and then she took her seat near the chancel.

One by one the old pensioners came dropping in, in such numbers that all doubt as to the wisdom of the renewal of the service could not be questioned. Irene knelt in silent prayer, and felt, as we have all felt at times, the refreshment of half-an-hour's withdrawal from the busy stream of daily life to the quiet and peace of the House of GOD.

It was not till the young curate who had been appointed to assist Mr. Bolton had begun to read the familiar words, "I will arise, and go to my father," that Irene became conscious that the seat next her was occupied, and that Philip Dennistoun was there. She looked up at him for a moment, and their eyes met: his sought hers with an earnest questioning, and hers replied with a glance of surprise and welcome.

The service was over, and neither moved. The shuffle of the retreating feet of the old people and the last echo of an asthmatic cough died away, and still Philip and Irene knelt on. At last, old Matthew Gillett stumped up the chapel with an impatient step, and Irene rose and prepared to go out.

Philip followed her; but it was not till they were under the old gateway over which the eagle presided, that they both paused. It was only a pressure of the hand, and Philip was the first to break the spell of silence.

"You did not expect to see me here?" he said, at last.

"No; I thought the Church at Rockdeane was not to be consecrated till next week—St. Michael's-day."

"I have not come only for the consecration of the Church: I came to talk to you."

"You will like to hear about Cuthbert, I know," she answered; "the end was very peaceful. I wrote to Rosie, and told her."

"Yes," he said; "she showed me your letter."

"He came home from Orchard Leigh with his mother at the end of February, and was much better—so bright and happy and cheerful! Still, I saw a change: there seemed no more fighting or struggling with himself. There was no need: the end was very near, and the victory was won! All the summer he was better, and we went to Whitby in July. He caught cold there; and, in some unexplained way, it settled on his lungs. We came home at the end of August, and he was carried by his father to his bed, which he never left again. It was the very gentlest message that came for him at last. No one can grieve for him; but"—and her voice faltered—"I am very desolate. He was so much to me!"

"I know he was."

"Since my mother went from me, he has been my great comfort; but I can be thankful for him. He left you many messages, and often talked of you. He amused himself very much with drawing latterly; and I have a boat and several little things which he asked me to give you if I ever saw you again."

"You knew you would see me again; how could you doubt it?"

She avoided a direct answer.

"I often hear from Rosie," she said; "I am so glad she is happy!"

"You must come and see her in her home. She wanted you for the grand occasion very much, and was terribly disappointed. They have been in Switzerland and Italy, and are now settled at Stow. The old people

retreat into a corner, and Rosie is perfection in their eyes. Mrs. Dennistoun has made her little place as perfect as any one could desire, and Jasper is getting wholesome dinners every day at the Grammar School at Bruton. He is a day-boarder, and rides backwards and forwards morning and evening. But I need not go over what must be old news to you; Rosie's pen is, I know, that of a ready writer. Has she told you what I am doing?"

"Yes; I am glad you have given up the Circuit, and are gone to the Chancery Bar. It will suit you better, I am sure."

"I have yet to see if I suit it; but there are reasons why I was very anxious to give up the Circuit."

They had reached the Close now, and the Cathedral rose above them in sombre majesty. The western light shone upon the grand front, and every pinnacle and turret was distinctly defined against the clear autumn sky.

In the midst of the toil and bustle of the present, how calm and full of majesty are these monuments of the past! I know nothing which speaks to us more of the littleness of our life here; that is, the life of detail and minutiæ into which every one of us is more or less insensibly carried on, than the sudden rising up before us of one of these hoary monuments of the life which others led before us, in the very place where we now stand. We turn out of a busy high street or market-place, and come under the shadow of a minster or cathedral, and instantly the silence and the calm around impress us with a sense of repose. We are lifted, it may be, by the thought of what was, to that which shall be, for us too, some day, as for the countless throng who are now in the Paradise of GOD—where rest finds its full fruition in

the service that never varies—and the LOVE which cannot grow cold!

"Will you walk round the Close with me before we turn into Ecclestone Square?" Philip said; "I have something to say to you. Will you listen?"

There was no answer; and for a moment Philip's brave heart sank within him.

"Two years ago," he began, "we met first, Irene, and I thought—I hoped for some time—that you understood me, and knew that I loved you. Then there came a change; you must know it!"

Her head was bent, and he could not see her face.

"There was a change, Irene, and you drew back from me. Am I not right? I drifted off from you, and tried to persuade myself that other interests and other hopes would soon take your place with me; that, in the path of worldly ambition and prosperity lying before me then, another might help me onward better than you could ever do, had you been inclined to try. But I believed from what I heard and what I saw, that you were not disposed to try. So I tried to persuade myself I could do without you; that to a man of my age the feeling which had sprung up for you could not be very deep; that it would not flourish without any return from you. But it was all a mistake and a delusion. The whole of that time I spent at Rockdeane was in many things a delusion. It was not 'Ad Cœlum' then; it was 'Ad terram.' But let that pass now. I come to you no longer with rank and wealth to offer you, but only myself, and such honourable position as I may, by God's help, win in the world. I know well to what charge I have laid myself open—to the charge of turning to you in the valley when I did not care to do so on the heights; but I must bear that, and

if it is possible that you can judge me gently in this, the voice of the whole world will not affect me."

Still no answer; would she never speak?

"Irene," he said again, and now his sonorous voice trembled with tenderness and depth of feeling: "Irene, if it is possible, will you try to love me; will you try?"

She stopped suddenly, and lifted her sweet face to his, in the fading light. It seemed to shine out from her deep mourning dress with almost an unearthly beauty—a spiritual beauty—which is never seen but on the faces of the pure and true of heart—a revelation of the inner self; given now and then, to tell us what is the beauty and what is the loveliness of the soul, when it is purified from earthly spots and stains; and, as far as may be in this sinful life, reflects the image of Him, who alone can thoroughly purge away the dross, and leave the silver refined and lustrous.

"Will you try?" he repeated; and the answer came with no uncertain sound, as she put her hand in his.

"I have no need to try," she said; "my love is ready for you, if you wish for it; quite ready, Philip."

His name left her lips slowly and quietly; and he took the little hand, and pressed a kiss upon it, saying,—

"It shall be *Ad Cœlum*; now, my darling, my dove shall bring me peace, and in the upward flight she shall lead the way."

They stood under the very shadow of the Cathedral, the stars coming out above, and the autumn twilight deepening fast. How long they paced up and down beneath the great buttresses of the east end, they never knew. But when, at last, they turned into Ecclestone Square, it was quite dark, and the lamps were all lighted.

"It is very late; they will think I am lost," Irene said. "It is so strange not to have Cuthbert waiting for me and expecting me; so strange, too, not to have to tell him what would have made him so happy."

"Perhaps it makes him happy now, and your mother too, darling."

"Thanks, for thinking of her," she said, earnestly.

They were on the steps before the door, now; and Philip lingered.

"Would you like me to come in or not? I will do what you wish."

"I think I would rather you did not come in to-night. I shall find it easier to tell Mary and Forster alone."

"As far as I am concerned, it will not be news to your brother-in law," said Philip; "he has known my secret for a long time. Good-bye, and God bless you, my darling, for what you have given me to-night."

Irene had rung the bell, and before the door opened, Philip was gone. Irene went upstairs to her own room, where she sat for a few minutes in a hush of thankful joy; and then, with a quiet serene face, went down to the drawing-room to find her sister.

Poor Mrs. Williamson was lying on the sofa; and when Irene came into the room, she scarcely noticed her.

"Is that you, Irene? how late you are; have you been to tea with old Mrs. Bolton? I feel very lonely, for Hilda is in bed, and Randal is at his lessons. I think you might have remembered me."

"I am very sorry, Mary, I am so late. I have not been to Mrs. Bolton's to tea; I sat with her till the time for service at the chapel, and there I met Philip Dennistoun."

Something in her tone made her sister turn her head. "Philip Dennistoun! is he here?"

"Yes; he is come to Rockdeane for the consecration of the church; but, Mary, he came for something else; he came to ask me to be his wife."

"What an extraordinary thing, Irene! If when he was Sir Philip Dennistoun of Rockdeane he did not ask you, I don't think it is much compliment now; though, of course, it was your own fault, as I always told you. However, I should think the present baronet's life a most uncertain one; and no one can tell—you may be mistress of Rockdeane yet."

How this purely worldly way of looking at her great happiness chilled and saddened Irene, I cannot tell. She looked across to the vacant corner, where the little invalid had left such a blank, and where she would have been so sure of sympathy, and tears rushed to her eyes.

"Still, I am very glad for you, Irene," her sister went on presently; "but I feel so dreadfully depressed and miserable, only to have three children, and to see one suffer as my darling did, and then after all our care, and hope, and anxiety, it is hard that he should be taken away, not by the disease itself, but an illness which might have been prevented. Whitby was too cold for him, and he lay about too much on the beach and cliff. We were all to blame; I, his mother, especially."

"Don't say so, Mary," Irene answered, taking her sister's hand; "and do not think of anything but that it was God's will that Cuthbert should rest from a life of weariness and pain, and be spared privation of many kinds, which I know he would have felt more and more acutely as he grew older. Then, Mary, think of what he has left us—such a blessed memory of faith, and tenderness, and patience; and we shall soon go to him—very soon."

"How can you talk like that, with the world just opening before you, Irene, and your happiness just found; for I suppose you have loved Philip Dennistoun for a long time, though you did try to make every one believe you did not care for him. And when will it be? and where are you to live? and what shall we do without you?"

The last question was a very genuine expression of feeling, and Mrs. Williamson's tears burst forth afresh.

Irene soothed and consoled as best she could, and in a few minutes Mr. Williamson came in. He went up to his wife, and kissed her affectionately; and, seeing her tears, said,—

"You should not lie here too much, dear, the room is so full of associations, and the blank is fearful, I know;" and he sighed heavily. "I have been out all day; and I have ordered dinner, tea, and supper all at once, so come down with me, and help me to eat it."

"Irene has got some news for you," said his wife. "Who do you think is here? not in this house, but at Rockdeane."

"Philip Dennistoun. I knew he was coming either at the end of this week, or the beginning of next. After the consecration, he intends to carry off the hopeful scion of the house to Oxford with him, and—"

"But the news concerns Irene; she is going to marry him!"

"Ah, is the secret out at last, then. Well, it is our loss, but his gain. But I congratulate you with all my heart, Irene; it is hard to say which of you has got the best prize. However that may be, we are all agreed as to what Dennistoun is; about the best fellow that ever trod the earth. It is something to remember all one's life, the

grand and noble way in which he took both his good fortune, and the loss of it. But we shall see him a great man yet. I mean in the eyes of the world; for he is already known at the Chancery Bar, where some men twist their thumbs for a life-time. He will be a great man yet."

"He is great already," Irene's heart whispered, as she returned her brother-in-law's very hearty congratulation. "Nothing outward can add to this, or take it away. I have known it always. I know it now; and he is mine."

The consecration of the little church of St. Michael's and all Angels' was attended by a very fair sprinkling of the people of Rodham and its neighbourhood. Many eyes were fixed upon the young baronet with curiosity, for he had led so secluded a life that he was not known even by sight to a large proportion of those assembled.

Sir Jasper could not be persuaded to issue any invitations for a luncheon at Rockdeane after the service; but Forrest and Mrs. Mason had prepared a cold collation, and Mr. Williamson and Philip let it be generally understood that any one and every one was welcome.

Poor Jasper was dismayed to see how many availed themselves of the opportunity afforded them of once again entering the house where there had been no gathering of any kind since the memorable January night when Philip had known that he was no longer master of Rockdeane.

During luncheon Sir Jasper was ill at ease and nervous. He called the good old Bishop, "Sir," and Canon Horne, "My Lord." He was covered with confusion when the Dean, with more fluency than judgment, made a neat

little speech, commending him for carrying out the building of the church, and not forgetting to refer to the restoration of Hildyard's Almshouse Chapel.

Perhaps Philip had never found himself in a more trying and difficult position than this—to meet so many whom he had known under different circumstances; to see the man who stood in his place so incapable of filling it; to do everything that was right, without appearing to push himself forward, was, indeed, a test of presence of mind and tact, which few men could have endured; but he came out of this, as out of most things, with honour; and the Bishop's hearty squeeze of the hand, at parting, was accompanied by the words,—

"I congratulate you, with all my heart, upon seeing the church completed, and for the kindliness and good feeling you have shown in coming here at all. I hope you will be able to help that poor boy a little. He repulses all friendly overtures in the neighbourhood, which is a great mistake."

Philip laughed.

"I am going to carry him off to London with me, and see him settled at Oxford; that is the best plan, I think."

"An admirable plan," said the Bishop; "an admirable plan. You are a wonderful man, Sir Philip."

The old title slipped out.

"I am afraid I shall never cure myself," said the good Bishop.

And Philip hastened to inquire for Lady Catharine and Lady Eugenia.

"They are still at Brighton," the Bishop said. "My wife was very much knocked up with London. It does not suit her; and poor Eugenia overtaxed her strength.

How long do you stay? Will you come over and dine with me quietly to-morrow?"

"Thanks; no. I leave Rockdeane to-morrow, or the next day, at the latest. It depends upon when I can get Sir Jasper to move."

"Ah, exactly. You don't think there is anything wrong here"—and the Bishop tapped his forehead.

"Oh, no, decidedly not; there is only a chaotic mass, which needs arranging and bringing into order; and whatever the head is, I am quite sure the heart is right. Don't give him up, my lord; but be kind to him when he returns from Oxford."

"You may be very sure I will, especially if you desire it," were the Bishop's parting words, as he stepped into his carriage, where the Chaplain followed him, with a great deal more Episcopal savour about him than his master.

The stream of people turned back to Rodham about four o'clock, and Sir Jasper and Philip were left alone. They were standing on the terrace together, when Sir Jasper shivered, and said,—

"It is getting very chilly; the damp rises from that stream. Had we not better go in?"

"What a libel on this crisp autumn air to call it chilly. Take a brisk trot with me round the place; it will do you good."

And Philip put his arm kindly into Jasper's.

"I am tired. I hope I shan't have to go through another feed like that for a long time, just to make a fool of myself."

"Nonsense; depend upon it, you will pick up wonderfully when you have been to Oxford."

"I don't think I shall go," he began.

"But indeed you will. By the first train on Thursday morning we must be off."

"Oh! not to-morrow, then?"

"No; I will give you a reprieve. Jasper, I have a great attraction in Rodham, and I am coming back at Christmas to carry it away with me. I am going to be married to Miss Clifford."

Jasper turned full upon Philip, and said, in the most simple, earnest way,

"I am so glad. Why, she is the nicest girl I ever saw, though she is not grand or fashionable."

"And for these reasons finds favour in your eyes, no doubt," said Philip, laughing. "Well, there is no praise of her that can be undeserved; and I am going down now to Rodham to see her, and I shall not be back till nine or ten o'clock, I dare say."

"Order the carriage; it's never used; it will do the horses good. In fact, what is the earthly use of my keeping that carriage?"

"No, thanks; I like walking best. I shall be down in Rodham before the carriage could come round."

"What a happy fellow you are," said Jasper, in his melancholy voice. "What are all those people saying of me now, and of you, as they go home? I know; they are calling me an idiot, and—what is the word—under-bred, and a fool, unfit for my position, and all the rest of it; while they are saying of you, that you are—Oh! well, they can't say too much about you, I know."

"I say, Jasper," said Philip, in the quiet, elder-brotherly way in which he always spoke to the boy, "Remember, there is fully as much conceit in always underrating ourselves, and dwelling upon our faults and failings, as in boasting of our supposed virtues. To lose

self in others is the grand secret of a noble life. You may make yours noble, Jasper, if you will try. You have begun well here, as regards substantial things, as that pretty white spire over the trees there testifies; and as to the rest, it will come. Your life with your grandmother did not prepare you for this, but God has called you to it; and now it is your business—your mission, if you like it better, to fit yourself for it. Good-bye; now I am off."

Jasper stood where Philip left him, his head bent, and his attitude one of extreme dejection. As Philip turned the corner of the house, he looked back at him. Genuine pity thrilled through him as he thought, "The sins of the fathers visited on the children to the third and fourth generation. Poor Jasper!"

Undoubtedly Sir Jasper was right when he said, "All those people will go home talking about us;" nor was he far wrong as to the kind of comments that were made.

"It really was too pitiable to see a youth like that in such a position," Mrs. Tillett said; "and I question the propriety of Mr. Dennistoun's appearance at Rockdeane just now. I think there can be no doubt he had better not have come; as, of course, it was only playing a part."

"Playing a part, Mamma!" said one of her daughters; "I don't believe Mr. Dennistoun could act anything."

"He always has a warm defender in you, Blanche, I know," said her mother, with that perpetual smile which was, to say the least of it, a trying characteristic of Mrs. Tillett's face, when she was saying anything particularly bitter or disagreeable. "He did not act, I suppose, when he professed to admire Lady Eugenia Le Marchant. Poor thing! I hear she is greatly broken down, and no wonder."

"At the loss of the position and estates to which she aspired, I daresay!" said Mr. Tillett, with a sneering laugh. "But I agree with you, that piece of perfection, Dennistoun, had better have left Rockdeane alone for the present. He is going to marry the lawyer's niece after all, I hear."

"Niece! sister-in-law you mean, Papa; that charming Miss Clifford whom every one admires."

"My dear, I am sure I don't know what relation she is to Dennistoun's man of business. These sort of people may marry whom they please, for all I care. Williamson holds a respectable position, I believe; but it is nothing to me;" and Mr. Tillett leaned back in the carriage by his wife, with the proud consciousness of superiority in which he delighted to wrap himself.

There are many Tilletts in the world, who earn for themselves that unenviable notoriety which is accorded to those who are for ever standing upon their own dignities and position, and judge others by the houses they live in, the coats they wear, or the dinners they give or do not give. Let them pass, as the Tilletts do, from our sight. To all true-hearted gentlemen and gentlewomen, in the highest acceptation of the term, their remarks, and their discourtesies, and their silly, patronizing, self-sufficient airs, are but like the idle lapping of the little noisy brook against the grey boulder, which it is powerless either to wash over or to disturb. It may fret the lowest ridge with a sense of annoyance, but it cannot take away aught from its strength or steadfastness; and, in the time of any drought or scarceness, when the little babbler is stilled and hushed, the rock can rear its head proudly above it unchanged, and is secure in a foundation which cannot be moved.

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It was on the morning of the last day of the old year, which had brought about so many changes, and had so altered the colour of her life, that Irene Clifford sat, in her simple bridal dress, in the little room at the top of the house, which she was now so soon to leave. The wedding was to be necessarily very quiet, and there was to be no grand display of dress and favours, no breakfast, with speeches and decorations, and the prescribed formula, which we all know too well—some of us to our cost!

But nature had put on her bridal garments to do Irene honour. Snow had fallen in the night, and now lay in its first spotless purity on the streets and trees in the square; while a brilliant blue sky overarched the city, and the sun rose in cloudless majesty over the Rockdeane Woods.

"Auntie;" it was Hilda's little voice, and then came a gentle tap at the door. "Auntie, everybody is ready; and do look here;—"

Irene opened the door to her little bridesmaid; and took a lovely bouquet of white flowers from the child's hand.

"That is from Sir Jasper," she said; "he is downstairs; and he brought it himself, and one for me and mother. Philip is gone, with Mr. Sandford and Randal, to Church; and you are to come now. Auntie"—and Hilda looked up at Irene with a pretty, childish, innocent admiration—"you look, oh! so pretty."

Irene stooped to kiss her, and said: "Hilda, darling, you will try to be good; and love God, and remember Cuthbert."

"Yes," said the child; "can he see you now, Auntie?"

"I think so; I think he is very near, and grandmamma, too," she added in a low voice.

And now a light step was heard, and a rustling of silk in the passage; and Rosie Sandford, looking more than ever radiant and bright, came in.

"I left you for half-an-hour's peace," she said; "now you must really come down. Your sister is getting nervous; and the gentlemen are gone—all but Forster, and that poor Sir Jasper, whom we could not get rid of."

"I am quite ready, Rosie," Irene said; and she followed Mrs. Sandford downstairs, and went to the drawing-room.

Mrs. Williamson was tearful and tremulous; and, when she advanced to kiss the sister so associated with her boy, her heart was too full to speak. But her husband asked Sir Jasper to take her at once to the carriage; and Rosie, and her brother Jasper, and the little bridesmaid, Hilda, followed.

Then there were only the bride and her brother-in-law left. The Rockdeane carriage conveyed them to the Church; and a crimson carpet had been spread over the narrow paved path which led to the door, which contrasted well with the snow.

The usual morning service began; and the small bridal party occupied two seats near the chancel. Irene was, perhaps, less oppressed with that dreamy sense of unreality, which comes to us in all the supreme moments of life, than many are. Her soul was always so well attuned to heavenly melodies, that earthly noises had less power with her than with many. When, at last, the

Marriage Service began, and she knelt by Philip's side, and put her hand in his, she gave him one look, so sweet and trusting, that the whisper of his heart was, "My white-winged dove—God help me to cherish her."

Very soon it was all over, and she was his wife. As they left the Church together, the spectators gathered there, felt the gaze of curiosity and wonder at the little display or pretension of the wedding changed into one of admiration, which was almost reverence. The faces of both bride and bridegroom were so stedfast and serene; and fervent was the "God bless them both," which broke from the lips of many of the old pensioners, who had hobbled up to St. Stephen's, despite the snow; and the poor people, who had found Irene a friend in many of their own sorrows and joys, now came to show their love and respect. The little Warden of the Chapel had assisted at the service; and he, and the other clergy, were the only guests present at the breakfast, beyond the small circle of relations.

Even one term at Oxford had improved Sir Jasper, and brushed him up a little; and, when he shook hands with Irene, he said, with more presence of mind than might have been expected of him:—

"Here is my present, Mrs. Dennistoun. I ought to have sent it, or given it to you before you went to Church, I suppose; but I don't know the proper thing to do on these sort of occasions. I hope you will like it; I expect you will, because Philip helped to choose it."

Irene smiled brightly; and unfastened the long white parcel. A red case, with her initials on it, came out of the folds of paper; and, on opening it, she saw a necklace of large pearls, with a pendant in the shape of a dove. On the back of the pendant was her name—*Irene*. She

looked at Philip, with an expression which implied she did not need to be told it was his selection.

"Thank you, so much," she said to Sir Jasper; "only it is too beautiful for me;" and she held out her hand to him.

Jasper took it in both his, and bent over it, saying, "I know you will be happy; you do not want me to say how I hope you will."

With all his weakness and feebleness of mind and body, there was a power of attachment about Jasper which showed, as Philip had seen, that his heart was in its right place. As the bride and bridegroom drove off to the station, no wishes were more fervent than those with which they were followed by Sir Jasper Dennistoun.

"So she is gone," Mrs. Bolton said, when the Warden returned, after all was over.

"Yes; she is gone, my dear; and a sweeter bride I never saw. She sent you these flowers, from her wedding bouquet; and Randal is going round the Almshouses with pieces of cake, which she tied up herself last night—a cake made for distribution, my dear. You are to have a piece of the grand original; Master Randal will be here with it in a few moments. Come, cheer up, my dear; cheer up; Mrs. Dennistoun is happy; and what can you want more?"

"I know it—I know it; but I shall miss her so much. When she was away all those months with poor Cuthbert, it was bad enough; but then there was a hope of seeing her again, and having her here. Now, last night, as she sat with me, and sang to me, I felt it was for the last time."

"Nonsense, my dear," said the practical, matter-of-fact, little Warden; "how do you know it was for the

last time? Now, let me tell you about the wedding. Mrs. Sandford looked like a little princess; and that great, long-legged husband of hers seems to adore her; that's just as it should be, of course. And they are coming to see you, to-morrow, my dear; so you must put your best cap on, and have tea and biscuits ready. They mean to come to the service at five; and will pay you a visit first. Mrs. Williamson was very quiet and subdued, poor soul; she feels that boy's death, and isn't like the same woman. But she managed to give us a very pretty little breakfast; and the wine was excellent—the dry Champagne particularly, out of the Rockdeane cellars, I fancy; but I may be wrong." So the Warden ran on, in garrulous fashion; finishing up with the information that it was freezing hard, and that there was no doubt that there would soon be skating.

When Randal came in with the cake, this piece of information was repeated, and was for the time of more importance to the boy than anything else; to the Warden also, apparently, though his skating days were long over; and he bustled out with Randal to inspect the state of the pump in the yard, and to prepare himself for reading prayers in the chapel; for his assistant was away "holiday-making," as the Warden said, after the fashion of all young men, curates or others, in these days. Mrs. Bolton was left alone in her communings with the past, in the glimmering firelight; and, as the perfume of Irene's flowers came to her like a message to tell of summer, on this wintry afternoon of the dying year, her thoughts lingered tenderly on the bride, who, in the midst of all her preparations, had found time, the evening before, to sit by her, in her old place, and comfort her with her sweet and gentle presence.

"Like them, she came to me," she thought, caressing the flowers, as she put them into water, "in the winter of my life, and kindled in me hope of the other life, in all its never-dying beauty, and has led me to look for forgiveness and peace where she herself has found it."

So Irene passed away from Rodham, carrying with her a blessing, and leaving behind her the memory of loving deeds of kindness and sympathy which will live in the hearts of many, while she sails out into the sea of life, and begins a new chapter in her earthly history.

CHAPTER XIII.

WORK, AND REST.

"How his noble, earnest speeches
With untiring fervour came;
Helper of the poor and suffering,
Truly he deserved the name."

A. A. Procter.

After many changes and trials, it happens to most of us that we come into a season of comparative calm and quietness.

Our lives are, so to speak, divided into chapters, some longer, some shorter; but there are few of us who cannot look back to certain eras and boundary lines, which, if unconsciously at the time, still most surely divide us from the past, and are as barriers which mark the severance from old ties, and that insensible stepping into a new order of things which, in their turn, become familiar, and in their turn, too, shall pass away.

Of the most monotonous and apparently uneventful lives this may be said to be true; but these changes are, in such cases, often hidden from all human eyes, and are not seen or noticed by others. In other lives such changes are patent to the most casual observers; and we see the poor suddenly made rich, the rich poor, the family so long untouched by disease or death

visited in quick succession by illnesses, and losses, and bereavements, or the troubled, changeful, unsettled life, by some unexpected circumstance become quiet and prosperous! Most truly has it been said that—

"This world's law is ebb and flow;"

and experience teaches us more and more the force and deep significance of the words.

From the opening of that new year which saw Irene become Philip Dennistoun's wife, a time of happiness was given to her of which I could give no detail here. It was a daily interchange of thoughts and sympathies, an ever-growing delight, which had its root deep, and from whence blossomed flowers of beauty and loveliness, of which the first were gathered in Eden, and which, in spite of the thorns and briars of little worries and petty troubles, true-hearted husbands and wives have continued to gather from that time till now. No very great measure of prosperity had been given them. Philip worked, and laboured, and distinguished himself at the Chancery Bar; and many eyes were upon him, and foretold greater things yet. His name was known in schemes for the help of the masses which lay near his own door. A brave and earnest Vicar of one of the East-end parishes in London was his great friend; and in the second year of his marriage, when he had sent Irene and his boy to Stow for a month's country air, he told her he was going to take a little independent holiday, where she could not follow him.

The shadow which gathered in her eyes cleared away, as he said,

"You must trust me, dear. I am going to sound some depths, and you shall hear the result."

She did trust him; and when, the day after they

parted, she had a letter from a certain Mercy Place, far down in the worst neighbourhood of the Docks, she understood it all.

"Once a-year," he wrote, "I must, at least, bring myself face to face with the evils which I so much desire to see ameliorated; once a-year, Irene, you will spare me for this end. Is it not better to gain a practical knowledge of the misery and the sin which abounds, than to write letters in the 'Times,' or to be Secretary to some great Relief Association, or vituperate Boards of Guardians?"

And Irene's heart answered, "*Yes.*" Every year these depths were sounded; every year Irene bore all Mrs. Dennistoun's satire and regret that Philip should be so very eccentric; every year she gloried more in what her husband did; and the day when she was present at the opening of the large school-house was a proud day to her—when Philip inaugurated the machinery of a club for the working men, and a school for the children, and provided every means to awaken in the poor the desire of helping themselves, thereby pulling down, it may be by but a grain at a time, the huge mountain of pauperism, and misery, and sin, which now rises up in the heart of our great cities, and cries unto God with an exceeding bitter cry.

"What it must be to live here in all this ugliness, and want of beauty!" Irene said, as they turned their steps to the Vicarage together.

"Ah, what it is!" he answered. "Are you not glad, dear, I tried it for a month myself? One month out of the twelve. It is nothing; but it is all I can do; and I have seen and felt with these poor souls, which gives me a hold on them, and makes them trust me."

"Yes; how they seem to look up to you, Philip. I wish I could help more."

"No, darling; you could not help me more. You are my rest when I am tired, and my comfort always; besides, there is the boy to look after."

"And make him like you," she said, with a pressure on his arm.

So the years went on. "The boy," as his father always called him, was followed by three little sisters; and the small house in Wilton Place had to be exchanged for a larger one.

In the summer of the seventh year of their married life, Irene went with her children to Stow; and, after Philip's month in Mercy Place, George Sandford and he were to start for a mountain expedition, as of old.

Stow was a rambling old-fashioned many-gabled house, standing in its own wide grounds, and backed by its own trees and rising pasture lands.

On a hot August afternoon a little party was assembled on the lawn. A great tulip tree gave a pleasant shade, and beneath it were gathered the elders of the family, with books and work; while the children played about on the lawn, and were tossing a large ball about hither and thither. Presently Philip came rushing across the grass to his mother. He was the only boy in the group. Rosie's children were little girls, and they were about the same age as Irene's.

"I am tired of the girls, mother," he said; "may I go with Uncle George to the station, to meet father?"

"Take care, Philip—how rough you are—you nearly upset my basket of wools. Irene; you really should keep that boy in order."

"Gently, Philip; you must mind what grandmamma

says. Yes, I think you may go to the station, if Uncle George will take you; but you must get that dirty face washed first, and your hair brushed."

He was off in a moment, his mother's eyes following him with a proud happy look.

"What a fine fellow he is," Rosie said; "and so exactly like Philip."

"I don't think he is nearly so good looking," said Mrs. Dennistoun; "certainly not as good looking as Philip used to be; but all his hard work, and these absurd ideas of his, have told on him."

"I don't think so, mother," was Rosie's reply; "and I think Philip is, as he always was, the perfection of strength and activity."

"He is not near so tall as my George: is he, dear?" said old Mrs. Sandford, who sat quietly in her arm-chair under the tree, with a thick rug under her feet, and only chimed in now and then with a little remark.

Her husband had died three years before, and George and Rosie were now the real master and mistress of Stow.

Rosie's attention to her husband's parents had been throughout very pleasant to witness; and now the old widow resigned herself to the quiet of the evening of life; and, as long as she had her own corner by the fireside in winter, and in the garden in summer, she was content. The unbounded admiration she had for the son of her old age was shared by his wife. Neither of them could do anything wrong in her eyes; and she was of such a placid, gentle disposition that her presence was never felt as an oppression.

Mrs. Dennistoun scarcely looked older than when we first saw her. Her fine figure was erect and still graceful,

though her forehead, perhaps, was marked with deeper lines, and the expression of her face was more careworn and anxious.

There never was a self-willed, weak boy like Jasper, who has not caused endless trouble and anxiety to his family; and had it not been for Philip he would have been irretrievably ruined. But Jasper had been kept in check by a firm wise hand; and, though terribly priggish and conceited, and given to big talk and pretension, he was reading pretty steadily with a tutor in the neighbourhood, and was to go to Oxford for the Michaelmas Term. Philip would have preferred his being sent into an office, and made to earn his own living at once; but his mother had pinched and saved, in every possible way, to send him to the University, and represented so eagerly, that at the Bar or in the legal profession Philip could help him on so much better than any other way, that he did not like to hold out against it. That Jasper had failed to matriculate on his first attempt was a wholesome lesson to his conceit and pride, and Philip made the most of it by stipulating that he should really read steadily with the tutor he selected, for a year before he gave his consent to his going up for another trial.

At one time Mrs. Dennistoun showed an inclination to promote a friendship between her boy and Sir Jasper; but Philip soon discouraged it, and finding, that after one visit to Rockdeane his brother had an unusual supply of pocket money, and that several reminders of his having been at Rodham followed him home, in the form of bills, forbid his ever going there alone again.

There was a curious similarity in the two Jaspers, which used often to strike those who knew them both.

Sir Jasper had decidedly improved in manners and appearance since he had been at Oxford; but after his time there was over he had relapsed into his old habits of seclusion, and his health being really weak and feeble he could more easily excuse himself from much exertion.

Dr. Simpson renewed his constant attendance at Rockdeane, and repeated again and again, as he was admitted by Forrest, "that it was like old times."

"A deal too much like old times," Forrest would say to Mrs. Mason. "It is unnatural for a young man, though in some ways it might be natural for an old gentleman."

By degrees, however, everything seemed to fall into the old groove; and, except for the bright modern furniture in the deserted rooms, which were now never used, it might have been old Sir Jasper who sat in the remote corner of the big house instead of the young grandson, who filled his place.

Once every year Philip went to see his cousin in the shooting season; and that was the time when poor Sir Jasper seemed always to be the brightest and happiest. It awakened him for a time from his indolent, dreamy life; and to take a day's shooting with Philip was one of his greatest pleasures.

Two or three times he had been Philip's guest; and, under Irene's influence, he had expanded into what had certainly not been expected of him. But natural temperament can never be wholly altered; and the self-consciousness and the self-depreciation of the boy did not lessen in the man, while there seemed no impetus sufficient to rouse him to a life of action and usefulness.

Just as the children had all cleared off to the nursery

tea, the wheels of the dog-cart were heard returning; and Irene went swiftly off to meet her husband.

"Here's father, all right," little Philip shouted; "and I've been driving; haven't I, Uncle George?"

"Yes; to the great peril of our necks, my boy," said Philip, as he sprang down to Irene's side.

One glance was sufficient to tell Irene that her husband was well and vigorous. The effect of a month in Mercy Place was always rather dreaded; and yet every year her want of faith seemed reproached: for Philip always looked as brisk and well as when he returned from an Alpine expedition.

Rosie and Mrs. Dennistoun now came up to the hall-door, to welcome Philip; while Philip the Less was still mounted on the dog-cart, and coaxing his Uncle George to let him drive round to the stables.

"You must have your own way, I suppose," said George Sandford; "but let me empty my pockets of the letters. I called at the Post Office for the North delivery. Here is one for you, Irene; and Philip has had one. Half-a-dozen for you, little woman, of course," he added, turning to his wife; "and one for Mrs. Dennistoun, from Jasper, I take it. Now, then, Philip the Less, you shall hold the reins, and we will betake ourselves to the stables."

Irene had disappeared, and now came back, followed by her two little girls; and the youngest, a baby, in her arms.

"Papa, father!" Ida and Gertrude shouted; "have you brought us a dollie?"

They always spoke in the plural number; for in nothing were they divided—sweet, rosy little maidens of three and four years old; while the baby, who was

only ten months, was transferred to her father's arms, cooed and smiled at him, and entangled her fingers in his long whiskers.

"Little Irene," he said; "does she deserve her name as much as ever? She is very much grown and improved, too; real country roses in all their faces, and in yours, too," hesaid, looking at Irene, and with one disengaged hand stroking her bright hair.

Under the shadow of the quaint old house, with its stone copings and pointed gables, they made a picture which no one could have seen without a sense of admiration, and perhaps thankfulness, that throughout this troubled world of ours are scattered groups, to whom our Father has given of the pleasant things of life richly to enjoy; and has bound together loving hearts in the beauty and sweetness of domestic ties.

"This letter is from Jasper," Mrs. Dennistoun said; "he is coming over for Sunday, and he would like to join you, Philip and George, in your tour; only I suppose the expense may be a hindrance.

Philip never could endure to hear Mrs. Dennistoun throwing out hints to her generous son-in-law for help to carry out any whim of Jasper's; and he said, shortly,—

"Our kind of tour would not suit Jasper. We shall walk most of it, and do an amount of climbing that would frighten you to think of. But I have had another offer of a fellow-traveller in this letter—one equally unfit to keep up with our long-legged friend. By-the-bye, George, do you see your last book of Alpine feats is in another edition, and well reviewed?"

"Not I; I don't trouble myself about reviews. I leave Rosie to gather up my scanty laurels for me. I am a great deal more set up about my last treatise on the

drainage of waste land. I am become such a practical man. Come, Philip the Greater, acknowledge that. An improved character, eh! Rosalie?"

"At any rate, I know where to find you when I want you," said Philip, "which is more than I could have said some years ago."

"Ah! that is the result of magnetic influence—isn't it, Rosalie?"

But Philip had turned to Irene, and said, "Take the children away, and come and have a turn with me before dinner, out of every one's way. How sweet and pure and good the country is, after Mercy Place."

She ran off with the baby in her arms, the elder children following her. Then she returned to Philip; and, putting her hand within his arm, they turned together into a plantation which skirted the grounds of Stow, and was always a favourite resort of theirs.

"Well, darling," Philip said, as they sat down at the end of a long grassy path, which ran through the plantation to the road above; "what does your letter say?"

"It is from Mary; she wants to see us very much, and proposes a meeting at Malvern, if I do not go to Rodham."

"Would you like to go to Rodham?"

"For some things. With you I should like it; but it is a long journey, and expensive with all these children. I don't know that it would be right; and I want you to have your Alpine excursion so much. You must need it after Mercy Place, and all your hard work before you, too."

"I don't absolutely want it; but it is three years since I looked on the mountains. Not since you and I were there together, and it is always a refreshment. Still," he

added, "I am not very keen about it this time. Sir Jasper wants to join Sandford and me, and I am sure it wouldn't answer; he would knock up, and lie heavy on hand, poor fellow!"

"Oh, yes. Don't have him; it will only be a tie. Both the Jaspers are best left behind, I am sure."

Philip did not answer. He was lying on the turf at his wife's feet, looking up into the deep blue summer sky, as it shone out through the tracery of the old Scotch firs, whose red trunks were streaked with a golden light as the sun slanted on them. A few birds were trying the preludes of their evensong, and there was a delicious coolness in the soft breezes after the heat of the day.

"This is perfection, in its way," Philip said. "We can but have perfection; and yet we are always hankering after something more than we have—something higher and better. When I think of those thousands I have left behind me to whom a glimpse of real blue sky, or the scent of flowers, or the sight of a tree is unknown, I feel as if the inequalities of life were too great."

"But we know they are not, Philip, though it seems a problem we can't solve. You have done your best—I am so proud when I think of it!—and Mr. Vernon said, the last time I saw him, that it was a great deal more what you were, when you went abroad amongst those people, than what you said."

Philip's serious, earnest face was still turned skyward.

"Irene," he said, presently; "while it is really 'Ad Cœlum,' it is all right with us; but we are so apt to mistake uneasy fluttering towards fancied good, for soaring; or, rather, for determined persistent climbing."

Then, after another minute's silence, he started up, and one of his merry laughs made Irene say—

"What is it, Philip?"

"I have forgotten to show you a work of art," he said, feeling in his waistcoat pocket, and producing at last a yellow envelope. "I sat to an East-end artist for my photograph, at the corner of Mercy Place, and the result is, he has sent me forth for sixpence—'my living himage,' as my landlady expresses it."

No wretched coarse delineation, or black-and-white shadows, with rough hard edges, could quite destroy the noble face at which Irene looked, joining in her husband's merriment, but still acknowledging to herself that the sixpenny photograph was her Philip; and feeling a sense of kinship and sympathy with the people about Mercy Place.

"Have many been sold?" she asked.

"Oh, yes; and a large copy is to be hung up in your schoolroom, in a gilt frame."

"My schoolroom!" Irene repeated. "Why will you always call it mine?"

"Did not the profits of two of your books go into it? And as I have told you before, that fifty pounds was the beginning; and it is always *le premier pas* which is of the greatest value. And how have you prospered here this time? Have the children been good? Philip the Less, I hope, has not fallen out with his Grannie?"

"No; he is a very good boy. Of course there are ups and downs; but he has a noble disposition, and is very easily managed, if one only goes the right way to work. Ida and Gertrude are really more trouble; and then Rosie's children are spoiled, and this tells on them a little."

"I should think so," said Philip; "how can it be helped, while that old lady keeps unlimited chocolate-

creams in her pocket, and dispenses them at all hours, and never says 'no,' either to George or Rosie—much less to the children?"

So they talked on, of many things, till the distant sound of the dressing-bell made them retrace their steps to the house.

There are rare moments in life when we realise our happiness—when we feel that we are in the sunshine of God's smile—and that He has crowned our lives with goodness. Such moments come upon us unexpectedly. Seldom, if ever, are they found in circumstances to which we have looked forward, or in the reality of some favourite dream or vision in which we have indulged. Rather do they come to us as angels' visits came of old to patriarch or prophet, and shed a soft and holy radiance, to which we look back through mists of tears, and recal every little detail of the moment which came and went and left a blessing behind.

Some such thoughts filled Irene's heart as she walked through the green vista of firs and pines with her husband that afternoon. The western sunlight flickered athwart the turf, and here and there touched little clusters of ferns and flowers with living beauty.

Before they turned into the open ground again, Philip stopped; and, looking down upon Irene's upturned face, kissed it again and again. There was no need of words; they had found their happiness in each other, and nothing could destroy it. For the heavenly Love was the key-note to which the earthly love was ever set. That music knows no jarring discord, though a minor strain may run through the melody, and God's voice be heard in it, saying—"I give and I take away; but my Name is Love."

The next day Philip came to Irene, as she sat in the garden with the children round her, and said—

"I have altered my plans a little. I shall go to Rockdeane before George and I set off on our travels, and I shall take you with me. Rosie is quite happy that you should leave the children here, and then we can come back together as far as Malvern with Mary and her children; and George will bring Rosie and her rosebuds to join us; so we shall have a happy and united family—not unlike those caged pets which go about in Mercy Place—till our return."

Irene's eyes shone with pleasure.

"A week alone with you will be delightful; only, ought I to leave the children?"

"Oh! yes, I think so; they will be in safe hands," and, he added tenderly, "I feel as if I should like you all to myself."

"Am I to stay at Rockdeane? it will be so strange."

"Yes; but I wish to have you there. So now we will put things in train," he added, in his decided way; "and start the day after to-morrow. You must not cast lingering looks behind after the three babies, and Philip the Less."

"I shall not do that while I have Philip the Greater," she said; and then Rosie came down out of the house in a very unmatronly fashion, and George strode after her in his usual leisurely way, with his hands in the pockets of his shooting coat, and a very battered straw hat over his eyes.

"I will take care of the children," Rosie said; "and on the 4th September, we will all meet at Malvern."

"Take care of the children! of course we will," said her husband. "I will whip them all round every morning,

and begin with this young rascal. I am off to see the colts now; will you come, Philips Less and Greater? No, no; not the little women," he said, as the little girls toddled after him; "no, no."

Ida and Gertrude turned back at once with rather rueful faces; but Rosie's little daughters set up a roar, and had to be pacified by Grannie, who came trotting out at the sound of their screams, with her usual specific of chocolates and bonbons. Ida and Gertrude needed no such comfort; they were soon contented by their mother's assurances that little girls could not always do what boys did, and ran away to play with their nursemaid, while the baby Irene was carried in for her morning's nap.

Sunday was a very happy quiet day. Jasper spent it with the rest of the large family party; and Irene confessed to herself that he was wonderfully improved. He was more chivalrous and kind to his mother, and she, at least, could see no faults in him, and was unusually benignant and genial, as she presided over a pretty tea after service on Sunday afternoon in her own little home on the outskirts of the grounds of Stow, which was a *bijou* in its way, and the very picture of elegance and comfort.

On Monday, Philip and Irene started; George Sandford driving them to the station, and watching the departing train, with little Philip at his side. The child's great wistful eyes were full of tears, and he had with difficulty kept down his sobs when his mother gave him her last kiss. George Sandford did not guess with what tumultuous grief that little true heart was heaving as he himself went whistling out of the station. But, as he gave the child a great toss up on to the box seat of the

carriage, he caught sight of the quivering lips and tearful eyes :—

"Hallo ! Philip ; cheer up, my boy ; we will have a jolly time of it, and in ten days we shall all be off together to Malvern ; and then it will be your father's and mother's turn to come to the station to meet you."

"Oh ! Uncle George, how do you know ? " the boy said, with a burst of grief, which was yet kept wonderfully in check for his age. "How do you know ? it will be an enormous long ten days before I see mother again ; so long, it is like never."

"You are a queer little man," George ejaculated, half to himself ; and then he began to divert the boy's mind, by talking about the little grey pony he had begun to ride at Stow, and stopped at the sadler's in the High Street of Bruton, and delighted the child, by buying for him a little riding whip with a silver handle, on which he ordered his name to be engraved in full :— "Philip Cuthbert Dennistoun."

Irene had only been at Rodham once since her marriage, during one of Philip's absences in Mercy Place, and then she had been her sister's guest ; and as it was during Sir Jasper's college days, she had only gone to Rockdeane once with Forster Williamson, and Randal, and exchanged a few words with Forrest and Mrs. Mason. But this visit was different. She felt as if she were in a dream, as she drove up the hill with her husband, in the carriage which was sent to meet them ; and she pressed Philip's hand tight in hers, as they drew near to the old oak door, where the eagle presided, with its never changing motto beneath—"Ad Cœlum."

"You have not been here since my short reign, dearest," he said ; "but I have, and I have long ceased

to have any lingering regrets; it is so much better as it is—for me—and for you too, perhaps."

"It must be; what is best for you is best for me," she answered. When the carriage stopped before the door, Sir Jasper was standing in the hall, and gave them a welcome which was heartfelt and real. He looked pale and thin, Philip thought, and had a constant cough.

"You are in no state for an Alpine expedition," he said, when they were left alone after dinner. "I think you should go out more at home, especially in fine weather. Where have you been to-day?"

"Oh! nowhere; I have had some letters to write, and all the accounts to go over with Forrest, and to settle about the re-letting of one of the farms. You know old Smith's widow has married again, and is in treaty for it."

"Yes, I knew she was married; and I hope has drifted into smoother waters with her second husband. But, Jasper, you don't look strong or vigorous, and I don't like to see you so down."

"It is no matter how soon I die," was the answer. "Dr. Simpson says—"

"Pshaw! don't pin your faith to that old woman. I beg his pardon; but now we are here, throw physic to the dogs, and try fresh air instead. Let us take three or four days at the lakes together. The other day you were writing about Switzerland, and wishing you could go with Sandford and me there; try your powers nearer home first. I can make out a nice little route, and we will be back again in time for the partridges on the 1st."

Jasper shook his head.

"I only mentioned Switzerland one day, when I felt restless, as I do sometimes. I never had any serious

intention of going. It is very kind of you, Philip; but I would rather be left in peace, and there will be plenty for you and your son here when I am cleared off."

Philip pushed back his chair impatiently: this hypochondriacal grumbling was infinitely trying to his patience.

"Well, let us go and hear Irene sing," he said; "and then we will discuss our plans with her."

But no discussion was of any avail; and three days after Philip and his wife had arrived at Rockdeane, the most pitiless and persistent rain set in, which swelled the stream below the scar into a torrent, so that it rose to the level of the little foot-bridge across it, and put an expedition to the lakes out of the question. On the night of the 31st of August, the weather seemed to reach a climax, and many were the anxious eyes which sportsmen turned to the stormy sky, at sunset, and many were the doleful prophecies about the morrow which were indulged in, with yet a secret hope behind that things might turn out better than was expected. At midnight, a furious storm swept over the country from the direction of the Irish Channel; and, as was reported in the papers, Derwentwater and Windermere were lashed into fury. There were several flashes of forked lightning, and double-barrelled peals of thunder, and the heavens seemed literally to open, while the rain descended in one vast sheet. The rushing of the little stream beneath the windows of the room Philip and Irene occupied, became like the voice of many waters, and one of the bridges was swept away. Towards morning, just as day dawned, the storm abated, and when the sun rose in a cloudless sky, at five o'clock, there was a great calm.

"We shall have a good day's sport after all," Philip said, when he came in to breakfast. "The keepers say the game will rise well after such a night. It is worth coming to the edge of the terrace, Irene, to look at the stream. Put a shawl over your head, for it is rather cold, although so calm and bright."

She took a plaid scarf from the stand in the hall, and Philip wrapped it round her, and they went out together to the brink of the scar.

"Who would believe that the waters could swell like that, and the little musical stream, which is generally so clear and bright, look so disturbed, and make such a deafening roar."

"I don't like it," Irene said, with a shudder, turning away; "it is like looking at a face usually serene and gentle in its expression, distorted with passion. It is so different to the grandeur of the sea in a storm."

Again she shivered, and Philip said :—

"Come in again; you will catch cold; these autumn mornings in the North are very chilly. You are to take a day in Rodham with Mary, are you not? and then you are to bring her, and Randal, and Hilda back to dinner. Forster is to join our shooting party, if he can give himself a holiday. Is not that the order of the day?" he said, as they re-entered the drawing-room, addressing Sir Jasper, who was inspecting a pair of enormously thick boots which were before the fire.

"Oh! yes; good morning; but I am afraid the ground will be awfully wet to-day. I hope you are well shod, Philip. We are to beat up the fields and coppice

beyond the church; that will be as far as I shall be good for, to-day."

"Very well," Philip said; "anywhere you like; but we shall have to go round by the moor, for the upper bridge is washed away."

All the plans and counter plans were made; and at ten o'clock Irene started in the pony-carriage to Rodham, leaving the sportsmen at the door. As she drove away, she looked back at her husband, and kissed her hand. His firm, well-knit, erect figure, with the game-bag slung over his shoulder, and his gun under his arm, was a contrast indeed to the small, stooping form of Sir Jasper, who was wrangling in a very undignified way with the keepers about some trifling matter connected with one of the dogs. Irene could not help keeping her head turned towards the group, till the curve in the drive hid it from her sight. Just as she lost sight of him, Philip raised his hat, and waved it, and the little bay pony bore her swiftly down the hill towards Rodham.

Irene spent a pleasant day amongst her old friends. She sat an hour with Mrs. Bolton, and the old Warden, who was scarcely as brisk as in former days, but as full of small talk as ever. Although years had passed since Irene's slight figure had been familiar in the courtyard of the Almshouses, a smile of glad welcome greeted her from those of the old pensioners who were yet living.

Randal, now a tall, gentlemanlike boy of fifteen, came for his aunt to the Almshouses at one o'clock, and took her back to luncheon. There, in the familiar drawing-room at Ecclestone-square, thoughts of Cuthbert came to Irene, like a sweet message from the past, and a hope for the future.

Mrs. Williamson still looked young and handsome. She was full of the country house to which they were to remove in the early spring, and was rejoicing in her emancipation from the town life, which she detested, not from any great appreciation of trees, and flowers, and beauty, but more from the undoubted fact that people who lived out of the place to which their profession bound them could take a better stand in the neighbourhood.

"A retired grocer is to take this house when we leave it," Mrs. Williamson was saying; "and it is far more suitable for people of that class."

Irene smiled. Life in London, and life with Philip, had almost swept away the remembrance of all these little country-town distinctions, with which she had once been so familiar.

"Hilda will be very pretty," her mother was saying; "and I do wish her to have every advantage, and get into the best society."

"That is still rather far off, is it not?" Irene asked; "I mean, her coming out. She is only thirteen."

"Oh! she is quite old enough now to take some tone from those with whom she associates. Here she comes from her German class. Randal has been to fetch her."

The door opened, and a very pretty girl of thirteen rushed in, and threw her arms rapturously round Irene's neck.

"My dear child," said her mother, "what a whirlwind you are. Your aunt will not thank you for such rough embraces."

"Indeed I shall," said Irene; "and I am so glad you are coming to Rockdeane this afternoon, Hilda, with Randal."

"Yes; and we are to dine at seven. I like dining late," said Hilda; "I am to wear my blue frock, cut square; am I not, mother?"

"Oh! of course you must be smart," said Randal, contemptuously; "I believe you have as many 'gets up' as there are days in the year."

"Run, and get ready for luncheon, Hilda," said her mother; "I am the best judge of your dress. And, Randal, I should advise you to do the same."

Randal departed, whistling; and his mother said,

"He will improve at Rugby, I think. I should have preferred Winchester; but Forster thought it too expensive, and too far. Have you heard anything of Lady Eugenia lately?" Mrs. Williamson asked.

"No; not for some years; not since her marriage."

"Well, I believe that has turned out very unhappily; or, at least, doubtfully. She has no children; and they live a great deal abroad for her health. Mr. Kerr was not nearly so rich as she expected, people say; and he lost his post in the Government by some means. That must have been a great blow to such an ambitious woman."

"Poor Eugenia!" Irene said. "There was so much to like in her."

"Well, I don't know that I thought so," was her sister's response, "but you have always the way of finding out something to like in every one. You used to defend the Tilletts and Thornycrofts, and all that kind of people."

"Did I?" said Irene; and her eyes looked out on the balcony where she had stood with Cuthbert one morning, watching Philip ride out of the Square, with a dreamy, far-away expression in them.

She remembered the boy's burst of sorrow, and the

question, "Auntie, do you know what it is to say *never* about anything?" and her answer.

"He knows now," she thought; "he knows now—better, oh! how much better than I do—that the *then* and the *now* are only parts of God's great whole. My *now* is so happy, my present so full of love and peace; but it may vanish, and change; and Cuthbert's *now* is for ever in the paradise of God."

She was roused from her reverie by the announcement of luncheon; and then, when it was over, she and Randal set off to the Cathedral for the three o'clock service.

"Forster will not come home, and I shall order the fly to take us to Rockdeane at half-past five. You will not keep us waiting, Irene?"

"Oh, no! Randal and I will take care of each other, and be punctual."

And then she walked with her nephew out of the Square, and reached the Cathedral just as the second chime was sounding.

"There is a good anthem to-day," Randal said, as he paused a moment at the pillar where the list of services were hung up. "It is, 'In that day shall this song be sung.' You know it, don't you, Auntie?"

Irene gave a sign of assent, and then they passed into the choir together.

It was a service long to be remembered. There are times, we know not why, or how, when our souls can rise on the wings of faith and prayer with less effort than at others. Times when, in God's House, the world seems shut out, and we are at the Gate of Heaven. Thus it was with Irene now; and when the last note of that glorious anthem had died away she felt that the peace in which

God keeps His beloved was hers; for did she not trust in Him, and was there not in Him everlasting strength?

The words fell upon other ears than Irene's with a strange prophetic power. Just outside the choir door Forster Williamson was standing, with his face so troubled and so changed from its usual bright expression that the vergers, keeping watch with their rods of office in their hands, looked curiously at him, as they passed him on their patrol from transept to transept. At last the organ began the concluding voluntary, the choir door opened, and the congregation came out into the nave. One by one they passed Forster Williamson, and at last Irene came. On her face seemed to linger the reflex of the peace of which the choir had sung. Her brother-in-law looked at her, but she did not see him. She went down the long nave, and he followed with Randal. Randal touched his father's arm.

"What is it, father?"—for he saw that something was amiss. "What is it, father?"

But he strode on to the door, through which Irene had just passed, as if he dare not trust himself to speak, and laying his hand on her arm, said,—

"Irene, I have something to tell you, dear. Come with me now."

CHAPTER XIV.

"DE PROFUNDIS."

"THE heart which like a staff was one
For mine to lean and rest upon;
The strongest, on the longest day,
With steadfast love, is caught away,
And yet my days go on, go on.

"I praise Thee while my days go on,
I love Thee while my days go on,
Through dark and dearth, through fire and frost,
With emptied arms, and treasure lost,
I thank Thee while my days go on."

E. B. BROWNING.

IRENE stopped, and turned to Forster with a questioning appealing look.

"Is it the children? Is my baby ill?"

"No; but there has been an accident, and Philip is hurt. I have a carriage ready; I will take you to Rockdeane at once."

"Philip!"

Only that one word.

Then she clasped her hands in mute appeal, while her face was blanched to death-like paleness, and involuntarily she caught at her brother's arm for support.

"This way," he said, "dear Irene. The carriage is

waiting by the south gate of the Close"—for she seemed powerless to guide herself, and walked as if in a troubled dream.

He dreaded lest they should attract notice, and hastened on, telling Randal to go forward and open the carriage-door, that there might be no delay. Then he helped her in, and seated himself beside her, taking the small cold hand in his. He had no great comfort to give her, or how gladly would he have spoken, and she seemed to feel it instinctively. Presently she spoke:

"Tell me, Forster, please, everything—he is alive—I shall see him."

"Yes, dear; but—"

Poor Forster's voice was choked, and he felt the little hand tighten its grasp on his.

"How was it? try to tell me. I wish to know everything!"

Oh, the childlike earnestness with which she spoke. Her voice, like the voice of one in great agony, which was with an effort calmly and patiently endured.

Forster Williamson rallied his energies, and told his sad story:—

"We were all coming back from shooting, this afternoon, when Sir Jasper said he was done up, and Philip suggested that we should cross the stream by the lower bridge, and come up the Rockdeane grounds that way. The upper bridge was washed away last night. In the morning we went round by the moor. You know the stream was swollen by the late rain, and that to-day it is more like a river."

"I know," she said; "it was dreadful. I saw it this morning"—and she shuddered, and closed her eyes, as if to shut out the sight of those angry waters.

"Go on, please, Forster; God will help me to bear it."

"When we reached the bridge, Philip was ahead of us, and passed over with the keepers and Mr. Farrant, the bailiff; I was left on the other side, with Sir Jasper. 'Keep a steady head,' Philip called out, as I put my foot on the bridge; 'and don't look at the water, it will make you giddy, Williamson.' I went forward carefully, and thought Sir Jasper was following; but when I reached the opposite bank he was still standing where I had left him. 'Come on, Jasper,' Philip said; 'and don't stand ruminating; it is better not to deliberate in a case like this.' But Sir Jasper hesitated. 'I shall fall in if I try to come. My head wouldn't stand it.' At least that is what I think he said; but his voice was lost in the sound of the waters, though Philip's rang clear above it. 'I shall have to come back for you, I suppose,' Philip said. 'Be a man, Jasper, and come by yourself.' I think something like pity, and perhaps contempt too, for the miserable indecision Sir Jasper showed, moved Philip to go to his assistance. He did look pitiable enough as he stood there, and at last made a few steps in advance, clinging to the railing with one hand, his gun in the other. Philip put down his gun and game-bag, which was full and heavy, and called out to Sir Jasper to stop till he reached him. He was half way over, and had just caught Sir Jasper's hand in his, when—whether his head gave way, or what, I can't say—with a shrill cry Sir Jasper fell into the water, his gun going off at the same moment, for he was carrying it loaded. Philip we thought had fallen too; but it was not so. He had thrown himself into the seething, boiling current to save that helpless figure, which we now saw struggling against the stream, and rapidly carried

down. Once he sank, and Philip, too, disappeared; and then Mr. Farrant and I saw him rise far below, battling with the water. A great boulder of rock stopped their downward course; and as Tarrant and I rushed with the keeper to the bank, we heard Philip's voice,—'I have him safe.' Such a triumphant voice it was."

Forster Williamson stopped, and covered his face with his hand. "In another minute, Philip was near enough for us to help him, and Sir Jasper was safe on the bank. We expected to see Philip make for the shore; but when Sir Jasper's hold was relaxed he fell back, and the stream swept him down to the great rock again with relentless force. The keeper waded up to it, for the water was shallow there, though very tumultuous and strong, and dragged Philip out. Then we knew first the extent of the mischief; he had a gun-shot wound in his left arm, and was insensible from loss of blood with the almost miraculous exertions he had made to save Sir Jasper."

"It was like his heroic noble nature," Forster added, passionately. "Now I have told you all, Irene."

"Everything?" she asked; then, after a pause: "Is there any hope?"

"The doctors were with him when I left Rockdeane," he answered. "As far as I could gather, there was more to fear than to hope."

During the remainder of the drive, Irene was silent. Forster wished she would burst into weeping, or some outward expression of distress; but such natures as hers, pierced in the very tenderest part, make no great demonstration in their hour of need. When at last the carriage stopped before the door, Irene loosened her hold of Forster's hand, and gave one short cry of exceeding

bitter anguish, as the image of her husband rose before her, standing under the old Eagle, as she had seen him last that morning, the very ideal of manly strength and vigour, and now! ——. But she was soon calm again, and passed through the group of distressed and frightened servants, with unfaltering steps. Mrs. Mason met her on the stairs, and said :—

"Will you not wait a little, dear lady, before you go in to the room?"

"No; please take my bonnet away, Mrs. Mason," she answered, unfastening the strings, and giving it and her little tight-fitting jacket to the housekeeper.

"I would rather go to him alone," as Forster was following.

He did not find it in his heart to tell her, that, perhaps, there would be no recognition for her in the eyes over which the shadow of Death might be even now gathering. But there is always awe and fear in the presence of a grief like Irene's.

No one attempted to interfere, and she went, as she wished, alone to her husband. They had taken him to his own room, known always as Sir Philip's room, and where the picture of the cavalier of Charles's time hung. One of the Rodham surgeons was by the bed where Philip lay. Dr. Simpson and another surgeon were with Sir Jasper. It thrilled through Irene's stricken heart to hear Philip's voice :—

"Is that you, my darling?"

She went up to him, and said :—

"Yes, dearest;" subduing all outward demonstration of pain for his sake.

"I have been asleep or dreaming," he said; "and, even now, I cannot quite remember what it is."

"Do not try, dear."

"What is the extent of the injury, Mr. West?"

"There is a gun-shot wound in your arm," said the surgeon; "and we think some injury too, perhaps, to the spine; but we hope to keep up your strength, and when Mr. Byron, who is telegraphed for, from Liverpool, arrives, we shall be able to make a full examination."

"Sir Jasper is safe?"

"Yes; you saved his life, Mr. Dennistoun," was Mr. West's reply, in a voice of deep emotion, and holding some stimulant to his lips.

"Thank you," he said, with his accustomed courtesy. "I am in no great pain; can you leave me now alone with my wife?"

Mr. West looked doubtful.

"Please tell me what to give him and what to do, and I will send for you, if he wants you," Irene said.

"We should not like to be absent from Mr. Dennistoun long," Mr. West answered. "I will, however, go away for a quarter-of-an-hour. Do not let more than ten minutes elapse without offering stimulant."

"No," said Irene; "you may trust me."

Mr. West withdrew; and Philip said, anxiously:

"Is he gone?"

"Yes, dearest."

"Irene, my child, this is a great, great trouble for you; for I think I am going from you."

She bowed her face upon the hand she held, and did not speak.

"While I am able, I wish to say a few things to you. Will you send for a clergyman, and let us have our last communion together *soon*. That is the great point. Then, about the children." His voice faltered. "Philip the

Less will be a comfort to you I know. If he ever succeeds here, teach him what 'Ad Cœlum' means. Let poor Jasper do what he wishes for him; but don't let him be indulged, or made to think this world is all. I am sorry for poor Jasper, for I think he loved me in his own way. Thank God, I saved his life. Don't let him hear about the gun-shot wound; it is not that—which is—which will kill me. It was a blow I had against a bit of rock. I felt it at the time; I was flung by the power of the water against that large boulder, like a feather."

The large grey eyes closed, and Philip's face grew deadly pale. Irene held the brandy to his lips, and roused him to swallow it. He revived again, and said:—

"We have been very happy together, darling, and we shall be happy again. You must try not to forget that I am only gone first. You will try to bear on bravely, my dove—my Irene."

"I will try," she said; "but, oh! Philip! Philip! is it possible; must I live without you?"

"If it is God's will, it is possible; and you must do it, my child."

There was the old decided tone in the answer; and it strengthened her.

"I should like the little work in Mercy Place to go on. If Sir Jasper offers money, take it; and let Mr. Vernon have it. I wish I could have seen Mr. Vernon; but it cannot be."

"I will telegraph for him," Irene said.

Philip shook his head.

"It is a long, long journey; he would be too late."

Then he was silent, and his eyes closed again; but his lips moved, and she knew he was praying. Once more he roused himself; but it was with a strong effort.

"Kiss me," he said; "it has been seven years—nearly seven years; thank God for those seven years!"

Then he added anxiously, as the door opened, and the sound of the doctor's returning feet was heard:—

"Don't go; don't leave me; keep close to me, Irene."

"Only to go and do what you wish, darling; and then I will come back."

How strength comes to the weakest in hours like this. With a heart aching, and a spirit crushed—as none can tell except those who have gone through the like—Irene went calmly on her way; told Forster of her husband's wishes; and went to the little room adjoining Philip's, which, in old times, had been Rosie's, to gather up her strength, for what she felt was coming, from the treasure-house of God's unfailing grace. She went to the Cross of Jesus for the power she wanted to bear this heavy one that He laid on her; and she prayed, with all the fervour of a heart whose every throb was agony—"If it be possible, let this cup pass; but not my will, but Thine, blessed Jesus, be done."

Mrs. Mason came to her, and Mary Williamson, entreating her to take something to help her to bear the coming night of watching. She did not resist; and returned to Philip's side.

The wound in Philip's arm was probed and dressed; and found to be of less moment than had at first been supposed. Had that been all, there would have been hope; but it was not all. Soon after midnight Irene withdrew into the adjoining room, while the Liverpool surgeon and Mr. West made their examination. She was kneeling all the time, in sight of the bed through the open door; but her face was buried in her hands. It

was not long before she heard a footstep; and, looking up, saw it was Mr. Byron and Forster Williamson.

She could scarcely articulate the words which rose to her pale lips—

"Is there any hope?"

Forster turned away, that she might not see his face, which was convulsed with grief; but Mr. Byron answered by raising Irene from her kneeling position, and, putting her gently on the sofa, said:—

"We fear more than we hope, Mrs. Dennistoun."

"Thank you, for telling me the truth," she said; "is there *nothing* to be done?" she added, with a helpless pathos in her voice, which went to the doctor's heart.

"The spine is so seriously injured, that the lower limbs are already paralysed. Even if life were spared, this must always remain unaltered," he said.

Irene asked no more questions; but, holding out her hand to the doctor, said:—

"I will go back to him now. Forster, don't grieve too much for me; and, oh! don't grieve for him."

For poor Forster had broken down, and could not repress his sobs.

"Go and see Jasper," she said; "and tell him; and give him my love."

Then she went quietly back to her husband; and his large, earnest eyes were fixed upon her.

"You have sent for the clergyman, Irene; who is come?"

"Mr. Bolton heard of this, and he is here; and Mr. Wyse, too; but I telegraphed for Mr. Vernon."

"If I thought I should have my senses, I would wait till the morning; and Mr. Vernon might come by the night mail. Is it safe to wait, Mr. West?"

Mr. West parried the question; he was not so straightforward as Mr. Byron.

"Well; I trust so," he answered; "your pulse is even now a little stronger."

Philip smiled.

"I will not run any risk," he said. "Mr. Vernon may yet come to hear what I have to say; but, Irene, let us have the service now."

"Yes, dearest, if you wish;" and she went to call the clergyman, and to warn the old Warden that he must try to be as calm as possible.

She was returning from her mission, when, coming down the dimly lighted corridor, from the opposite wing of the house, she saw Jasper, in a long dressing-gown, with a lamp in his hand, walking unsteadily towards her.

"I want to see him; I must see him," he said. "He shall not die. I shall send for Paget and Ferguson, from London. What do these doctors know? He *shall* live."

"Hush, Jasper," said Irene, firmly; "you must not talk so. You are not fit to leave your bed; you will be very ill, if you do. Go back with Forrest."

"I won't go back. Oh! Irene, Irene, would that I had died! What did he jump in after me for? My life was not worth saving; and he—oh! Philip—my best, and truest, and most generous friend—he shall not die for me!"

"He is out of his head, madam," said Mrs. Mason; "I must take him back; Dr. Simpson said he was to be kept very quiet."

"Jasper," Irene said, firmly taking the thin, almost feminine, hand in hers, "I know you love Philip; you would not wish to disturb him now. If you can be

quite calm, I will call you to the service, which we are going to have directly; and you shall see Philip. Come into the sitting-room, and lie down till then."

He made no further resistance; and let her lead him to the sofa, where she covered him with wraps, and left him to Mrs. Mason. In half an hour all was ready; and, faithful to her promise, Irene went for Sir Jasper.

"Can you be quite calm?" she asked.

"I will try; but is it the Communion? I never received it in my life."

"Then begin now," she said, solemnly; "begin now a new life, at the gate of another world."

Like a poor stricken creature, Sir Jasper followed Irene, and knelt where she told him at the foot of the bed. The glance he gave towards Philip reassured him. As he lay, propped up with pillows, his face settled into a holy resolution; there was nothing in him unlike the Philip he knew in health.

"His face was as the face of an angel," Mr. Bolton said to himself, as he controlled his voice by a strong effort, and began the words of the service.

When it was over, Philip, to Irene's surprise, said—

"Let Jasper come nearer."

She had not thought he had observed his entrance. She touched his shoulder; and, bending over him, said—

"Philip wants you. Do not give way."

He tottered to his feet, and went up to the head of the bed.

"Jasper!" and the tone was one of mingled tenderness and sympathy, which he might have used when speaking to his own little Philip in some childish trouble; "Jasper, I am very sorry for you. I know you feel this; but you must take comfort, and remember it is not our will, but

GOD's, that I should die. Hush!"—for Jasper's convulsive sobbing broke forth—"Hush! I want to ask you to be kind to my boy and his little sisters and to their mother. I want you, too, not to forget those poor people in London amongst whom I have worked a little, and to help my friend Mr. Vernon in his heavy labours. Above all, Jasper, I want you to love GOD and serve Him, and administer the riches He has given you well. Good-bye, Jasper; I am tired now, I think. Good-bye, and may God bless you!"

"Oh, Philip, Philip! I hope I shan't live long! I wish I was in your place now. *Why* am I not? But I will do as you wish while I live. Oh, thank you for all you have done for me! It half kills me to think how little I have deserved it."

"It must be good-bye now, Jasper," Irene said; for she heard a tired sigh escape from her husband's lips.

Jasper covered the hand which lay nearest him with kisses; and then Forster Williamson half carried him away.

The ways of God are mysterious; and poor Irene's heart might well ask, "Why is he left, and Philip, in all the energy and pride of his manhood, taken away?"

There was no answer, then; but God will give Irene an answer in His own good time.

The night-watches dragged heavily onward. Sometimes, in his short, fitful sleep, Philip wandered. Irene caught the words as they fell from his lips, and treasured them in her heart: the wanderings were so entirely glimpses of the inner life of that noble spirit which was now passing away from her. He talked of the snow-mountains and the glaciers; of steep ascents and toilsome upward paths; of the glory of rose-coloured sunsets on

the pure snow. He talked of Mercy Place and the people there; of noble efforts to bring beauty into those sad and darkened lives; of the power of the Name, which is above every name, to change the aspect of life—even in Mercy Place. Once she heard him murmur, "I tried to mount on eagle's wings, and I went back. I must not press on too hard: I must wait. Irene told me so."

Towards dawn he became weaker and very restless; he was oppressed with the sound of rushing waters, and entreated her to take him out of the noise. The doctors had come in and out through the night, and Mrs. Mason and Mary Williamson sat in the adjoining room; but he took no longer notice of any but Irene.

All the next day his life ebbed fast; and when Mr. Vernon and George Sandford arrived, in answer to the messages which Irene had sent, he seemed scarcely to recognise them. Once, when Mr. Vernon prayed by his side, he turned upon him a look of friendly greeting, and whispered—

"I am glad you came."

But that was all. It was a dark and cloudy day, and the atmosphere was heavy and oppressive; but about sunset the sky cleared and the sun sent a parting glory over the moors and hills and woods, and illuminated the sombre walls of the west side of Rockdeane with unwonted brightness. The window looking over the stream, now hushed again to its old quiet music, was open, and a ray of sunlight coming into the room, lighted up the face of Sir Philip Dennistoun, as he kept watch over the bed where the other Philip lay.

Irene did not think her husband was conscious at that moment of any outward thing; but she was startled by his voice, saying—

"Look at Sir Philip, Irene!"

A bright light, but not of this world, was in his face as he spoke; and the resemblance between the two faces was striking; and then she heard him say, more faintly,—

"Eagle's wings!"

She seemed to understand his wish; for she repeated the familiar words, with an unfaltering voice,—

"They that wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint!"

His eyes turned from the picture, and fastened on Irene. She saw that the light had faded, and that a grey shadow was creeping over the face she loved—as only women like Irene can love. Half-unconsciously she went on,—

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil;" and then, as he pressed her hand tight, as if to acknowledge that he heard and was comforted, she repeated favourite words of his, taken from a Bible history she had often heard him read and dwell upon,—

"From the top of the rocks I see Him, and from the hills I behold Him."

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

She knew that he was leaving her now; but she would not move, or relax her hold of his hand, to call anyone to come.

Once more he spoke—"Irene," as if he were seeking her.

"I am here, darling."

"I shall see Him soon. It is not so dark now."

Then he shut his eyes, and his head turned towards her on the pillow, with the gesture of a tired child falling asleep. The breathing became slower and slower; then it ceased—and he was gone!

Irene knelt on. She knew that it was Death; but so serene was the mouth, so untroubled the noble brow, beneath which the dark lashes were lying so quietly over those closed eyes, on the cheek where the colour yet lingered, that, but for the terrible stillness, which is like nothing else in the world, he might have only fallen asleep. Why do I say might have fallen asleep; for was not Philip's the sleep of God's beloved, which shall know no waking till the great Easter morning when all that sleep in Jesus shall rise to a glorious immortality?

They came soon, and led her gently away. She shed no tears, and made no sign of grief. Others wept around her, but she was calm. Her eyes had in them a wistful, earnest expression, which seemed to pierce the veil, and follow him where he was gone.

"I should like to see our children," was almost the first thing she said, "if Rosie and Mrs. Dennistoun can bring them. I want them now."

"You shall have them, dear Irene," George Sandford said. "Anything we can do for you we will."

"I know it," she said, and her lip quivered. "Philip is old enough to understand. Philip! Philip!"

She repeated the name slowly and tenderly, but no tears came, as they hoped.

"One thing more, George. I wish him to be buried in Hildyard's Chapel, as near the other Philip as possible."

She lay back in the chair where they had placed her,

and continued that silent gaze, which seemed to grow more intense every moment; she wished to be alone, she said; and, when her sister had helped her to undress, Irene kissed her affectionately, and whispered,

"I hope you will have a good night; you must be tired."

"Let me stay with you, dear Irene; please do."

"I would rather be alone, if you don't mind—quite alone."

As her sister was leaving the room, she called her:—"Mary, don't think I am unkind; but I shall feel nearer to God, and to him, if no one else is with me. Cuthbert and he have met, I know, and our mother. Dear Cuthbert!" she added, as her sister's tears burst forth again at the sound of her boy's name. "Do not cry so bitterly, Mary; they are only gone first. He told me to try to remember he was only gone *first*. Good night!"

Her sister returned, and clasped her in her arms. Irene kissed her again and again, in her own quiet and gentle way; but she said no more. And so they left her, as she wished, alone.

"This unnatural calm! How long will it last?" they said to each other, as the days went by, and still no change. Rosie and her mother and Jasper and the children came; but though Irene pressed her little ones to her heart, she did not weep. Day after day she sat in that hushed and silent room, holding communion with the dead, and praying there such prayers as only hearts so stricken and bereaved can understand.

On the third day Irene led little Philip to look on his father's face, so beautiful in its last long sleep that she knew the child could have no shrinking from it. The

boy pressed his mother's hand tight, but laid the flower she gave him on the quiet breast, and whispered,

"Mother, papa is asleep. I can't think why he does not wake. Has God sent him to sleep?"

"Yes, my darling," his mother said, struck by the child's words; "yes, but papa will wake again."

"I am glad of that," Philip said; "I want him so."

Then came a little broken sob, and Irene took him to her heart, and comforted him.

They laid Philip to rest in the antique chapel, with none of the distressing pageantry of woe which had marked the last funeral there; but all that could suggest the bright hope of immortality through Him who had overcome death took its place. Hymns were sung, which told of rest from labour, and the endless joy of the redeemed; flowers were laid upon the coffin by loving hands; and the promise of never-withering flowers, and the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting, was brought home to aching hearts.

Those who saw Irene stand at her husband's grave will never forget it.

Her tearless face was very pale, and her hands clasped tightly together. A long-lingering glance of farewell, and then she suffered Forster Williamson to lead her gently away. As she passed Sir Philip and Dame Editha's tomb, she looked up at it. Then, by some unexplained and mysterious touch of association, there rushed upon her the memory of that autumn day, long years ago, when she had seen her Philip standing there, on that very spot, in all the pride and vigour of his manhood. The contrast between that day and this, broke suddenly the ice-bound current of her tears. As her brother-in-law put her into the carriage, the long-denied

relief was granted; and she lay down in her bed that night, with her baby in her arms, and, by God's great mercy, wept herself to sleep. The next morning Irene awoke to the full blank and loneliness of her life; but she knew her Philip had reached the Highest now; and, though she was left in the valley, it was not as one without hope, and she set herself to tread her solitary way in faith and patience.

Those who are unselfish in joy are unselfish in grief; and we commonly see those whose loss is the greatest, rise out of themselves much sooner than is expected of them, after some great bereavement. Such grief as Irene's does not find its consolation in the width of the black border on cards and paper, and other outward signs of woe, but rather in the effort to forget self in the living, and for the sake of the dead.

Philip had left Irene sole guardian and trustee for his children, and everything was absolutely hers. It seemed to please and comfort poor Sir Jasper, that she should stay at Rodham; and, indeed, there were no ties or links with Philip so strong as those she found in the place where he died and was buried. So she determined to remain there, where his name was loved and honoured; and all her books and furniture, dear to her from association with the happy years of her married life, were brought from her London home, and gathered around her in a house on the outskirts of the city, where she was settled with her children before winter came on.

Sir Jasper was very ill after the shock of Philip's death, and his lungs were so seriously affected, that he was sent to Algiers by the London doctors for the winter.

Rockdeane was shut up, and deserted, except by Forrest

and Mrs. Mason; and there were some who said Sir Jasper would never return to it. He wrote often to Irene, and her only difficulty was to prevent his being too lavish in his gifts to her and her children; while Mr. Vernon received enough to carry on all that Philip had begun in his poor and destitute parish.

Mrs. Dennistoun had no longer any restrictions placed upon her, and she saw her son Jasper entered at Oxford, with a liberal allowance; while the seed that had been sown by Philip's hand, in the apparently hopeless ground of Jasper's heart, bore its fruit.

Memories of his brother's example and care for him, seemed to have their effect, now that he was taken from him for ever; and he did well at the University, and showed a perseverance and steadiness which had never been expected of him.

In George Sandford's happy home, Philip's memory was also held in honour and reverence. Rosie gave her first-born son his name; and tears would often dim her bright eyes, as she told his grandmother and indulgent father that her boy must never be spoiled; he must be made worthy of the name he bore—Philip Dennistoun Sandford.

Sir Jasper did not return to Rockdeane for the summer, nor for several summers.

One day, when little Philip was just nine years old, he was walking by his mother's side, through the woods of Rockdeane; he stopped suddenly—

"Mother," he said, "I heard nurse say to-day that I should be master of Rockdeane very soon, for Sir Jasper would never come home, and that I was his heir. I would rather be my father's heir than his."

"You are heir to your father's name, dear Philip, a

name which is better than riches. If it pleases God that Sir Jasper dies, and he has no little son of his own, you will inherit his title and estates. But Philip, when papa was on earth, he was always trying to remember the words which are cut in stone under the old eagle, over the Almshouse gateway. You know what words those are."

"Yes; you told me, 'Ad Cœlum.' They are on that seal of father's that you gave me on my birthday," Philip said quickly.

"Yes; and they were his watchword in life, and in death. It was always *heavenwards* with him. Philip, he asked me, when he was dying, to teach you their full meaning. Day by day, and year by year, as you grow older, I must try more and more to do so. And then, whether God sets your feet in high places of the earth, or lets you tread a much humbler path, it must be right; you will grow to be a great man, and not unworthy to bear the family motto, and your father's name."

And the boy looked up at his mother with his earnest eyes, and said firmly, and with all the resolution of the father of whom they spoke—

"I will try, mother, I will indeed; I will try to be what my father was, and I will ask God to help me."

Then the mother and son walked home together. The child was soon whistling gaily in his boyish fashion again, and disappearing every now and then amongst the bracken and heather of the Park, for some treasure of nuts and blackberries to carry home to his sisters, while the mother was left to her communion with the Past.

How can I better express the thoughts which filled her heart on that bright autumn day, than by the words of a poet of our own time. How can I better tell of the

hope and the faith which were as an atmosphere in which she lived to that sweet and gentle woman, who went about on her ministry of love day by day; who brought her children to taste the peace she knew for herself to pass understanding; who was, as in earlier days, known amongst the sick, and the old, and the poor as an angel of consolation and help. Yes, better than any words of mine, are these with which I close the story of Irene's life, as far as I can follow it—better than any words of mine or any pæan of praise that I can sing, is the "Psalm" which, if I mistake not, will find its echo in many a heart whose spring-time is over, and whose summer is ended; but who, from the calm stillness of an autumn filled with the gifts of God, can yet thank Him and take courage:—

"The air of spring may never play
Among the ripening corn;
Nor freshness of the flowers of May
Blow through the autumn morn.

"Yet shall the blue-eyed gentian look
Through fringèd lids to heaven,
And the pale aster, in the brook,
Shall see its image given.

"The woods shall wear their robes of praise,
The south winds softly sigh;
And sweet calm days, in golden haze,
Melt down the amber sky.

"Not less shall manly deed and word
Rebuke an age of wrong;
The grass and flowers that wreath the sward
Make not the blade less strong.

"Enough, that blessings undeserved
Have marked my erring track;
That, wheresoe'er my feet have swerved,
His chastening led me back.

"That more and more a Providence
Of Love is understood:
Making the springs of time and sense
Sweet with eternal good.

"That Death seems but a covered way
Which opens into light—
Wherein no blinded child can stray
Beyond the Father's sight.

"That care and trial, seen at last
Through memory's sunset air,
Like mountain-ranges, overpast,
In purple distance fair.

"That all the jarring notes of life
Seem blending in a psalm;
And all the angles of its strife
Slow rounding into calm.

"And so the shadows fall apart,
And so the west winds play,
And all the windows of my heart
I open to the day."

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